

# CONVERSATION GUIDE:

## OPENING QUESTIONS:

- How do you typically respond when you learn about conflict between two people you care about? Do you tend to take sides, stay neutral, or avoid the situation entirely?
- What's your initial reaction when someone points out a disagreement or tension you're involved in?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Phronesis* is "a pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting." How does the way we think about situations impact how we respond to conflicts?
- How does Paul's description of the Philippians as his "joy and crown" inform our understanding of Christian community?
- In what ways should understanding our connectedness in Christ influence how we handle disagreements?
- What message does our willingness to reconcile send to those around us?
- When is it appropriate to set boundaries in relationships while still maintaining a Gospel mindset? How can we balance grace with wisdom?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- Is there a relationship in your life where you need to adopt the "mind of Christ" rather than your own perspective? What would it look like to approach that situation with *phronesis*?
- How might your understanding of the Gospel help you extend grace to someone who has hurt or offended you?

## GROUP FOCUS:

- As a community group, commit to being people who help others "agree in the Lord" rather than taking sides or spreading gossip. Consider establishing group practices that foster unity and reconciliation: Pray together, commit to speaking about others in ways that reflect having "the mind of Christ," and consider reaching out collectively to someone who may feel disconnected from community because of unresolved conflict.



## WEEK 25 THE JOY OF *PHRONESIS* (PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3)

## TODAY'S VERSES:

Philippians 4:1-3	Philippians 3:15-20	John 1:1 & 14
Philippians 1:27 & 7	Philippians 2:5	1 Timothy 1:13-14
	Colossians 1:17	

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## WEEK 25

# THE JOY OF PHRONESIS

Philippians 4:1-3 serves as the culmination of Paul's argument from the previous chapter. Throughout Philippians, Paul has emphasized the importance of phronesis - "a pattern of thinking, feeling, and acting" shaped by the Gospel. In these verses, Paul addresses a specific conflict between two women in the Philippian church, Euodia and Syntyche, urging them to "agree in the Lord" - to adopt the same mind of Christ in their relationship. Paul doesn't take sides, dismiss their concerns, or force an artificial friendship; rather, he calls them to view their disagreement through the lens of the Gospel.

**"...my joy and crown..." CROWN** – Is the word *stephanos* and comes from athletics. When someone won an ancient game, the victor received a crown, a laurel wreath was placed on their head. This is like our Olympic gold medal, for many it is the proudest moment of a life to show off that "crown." Paul says the Philippian church was his "crown".

**Phronesis** – is a word that some commentators think is the central idea of the book of Philippians.

- Phil 1:7 *It is right for me to feel (phronesis) this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart*
- Phil 2:2 *complete my joy by being of the same mind, "phronesis."*
- Phil 2:5 *Have this mind "phronesis among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*
- Phil 3:15-16 *Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think ("phronesis) otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.*

Paul says that he wants their understanding of their past, present, and future to be eclipsed by the Gospel.

**Integrated Whole** – Having the same mind around the Gospel is what makes an integrated people. The ultimate lie of the modern age is that you are an isolated person on your own island. Paul enlists others in the church to help reconcile relationships highlighting how we are all connected in the body of Christ. When we understand the Gospel – that we are saved by mercy and not our own works – we develop humility that enables us to have the mind of Christ and maintain unity despite disagreements. This unity becomes our "joy and crown" as we learn to think, feel, and act in accordance with the Gospel in all our relationships.

**Understand the Gospel** – When we all have the correct knowledge of the Gospel, we can be unified even if there are other places (that are not the Gospel) where we disagree. The Gospel is that we were separated from God because of our own sin, but God in His infinite mercy sent Jesus for us. Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live and substituted Himself in our place. He went to the cross as our sacrifice and took our death (because that is the penalty for sin) upon Himself and exchanged that for His life. He rose from the dead as the first of a promised resurrected and renewed community of people who worship God and Him alone. We spread this message of good news, that we can be united by Christ and we can be defined by what Christ has done and not by our past.

Christ's work leads to a humbleness. There is an undeserved relief that comes with saving grace. How do we get saved? Mercy. That understanding leads to a humbleness where we shift our minds off of ourselves and instead "have the mind of Christ."