Starting the New Year brings us a new series. We will be spending the next three months studying the Book of Philippians, written by the Apostle Paul.

- Philippians is a personal book. It tells us the most about Paul.
- It’s a personal letter. It deals with a lot of the problems in life that we all face, a lot of examples of day to day decisions.
- Most of all, Philippians is a positive book. The words “joy” or “rejoice” or “be glad” are used seventeen different times in this book.
- I’m calling this series, “How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life” because it deals with how to be joyful in spite of circumstances, in spite of problems.
- I want to thank Rick Warren for his help with this series.

Read Philippians 1:3-11 & PRAY!

In the first chapter, Paul starts right off talking about people.

- If relationships are bad, life stinks.
- If relationships are strained, life is difficult.
- If you have problems with people it kills the joy in your life.

This morning I want us to look at “How to Enjoy the People in Your Life.”

- Peter Drucker, the father of American management, said that the number one characteristic of a CEO, of a leader, is that they enjoy other people.
- Do you enjoy the people around you, the people you work with, the people that you’re married to, the people in your family?

What does it take to enjoy the people in your life? Four keys that we see from Philippians 1:3-11:

I. Be grateful for the good in people.

A. Vs. 3, “I thank my God every time I remember you.” Paul said I like to remember the good things about people, focus on the good times we’ve had, remember the positive experiences. What do you remember about people, the good experiences or the bad experiences?

B. When Paul said this he had not had an easy time in Philippi. Acts 16 tells us the background of this story.

1. When he went to Philippi Paul was arrested illegally, whipped, humiliated and thrown in prison.
2. While in prison there was an earthquake.
3. He was asked to leave town.
Paul did not have a good time in Philippi; he had a bad time. Yet he says, when I think of you I remember the good things. “I thank God every time I remember you.” Paul could have dwelt on the negative. He could have remembered the painful memories. He chose not to remember the painful and he focused on the things he could be grateful for.

C. Maybe you have, in your past, been hurt by a parent or a partner and you’re still holding on to that hurt. As a result you can’t enjoy them today. You’re still focusing on the bad and the negative. Be grateful for the good in people. Pleasant memories are a choice. I can choose what I’m going to remember about the past.

D. LESSON #1: Remember the best, forget the rest.
   1. I’m not saying that you deny the hurts you’ve had or that you excuse the weaknesses in other people. That is psychologically unhealthy. But focus on the good and choose to emphasize the strengths.

E. Who do you need to be thankful for? Who have you taken for granted in your life? Who have you failed to appreciate? When was the last time you wrote a “thank you” note, or bought some flowers, or made that favorite dinner, gave a kind word?

II. Practice positive praying. Vs. 4, “In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.” How would you like to have the apostle Paul praying for you? Would that encourage you? Isn’t it an encouragement when you know people are praying for you when they remember you?

A. LESSON #2: The quickest way to change a relationship from bad to good is to start thanking God in prayer for people.
   1. This will do two things: change your attitude and change them. Positive praying is much more powerful than positive thinking. People may resist our advice and spurn our appeals and reject our suggestions and not listen to our help, but they are powerless against our prayers.
   2. When you say to somebody, “I’ll pray for you” what do you say? What do you pray?

B. Paul spells out specifically what he’s praying for people. Vs. 9-11, “And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.” Four things Paul prays for other people. You can pray these for people in your life and you can know that they’ll be answered because they are God’s will. They’re in the Bible.
   1. Pray that they will grow in love. “… abound in love …” means to overflow, like a tidal wave.
   2. Pray that they make wise choices. “discern what is best”
3. Pray that they will do the right thing. “... be pure and blameless ...” and have a clear conscience.

4. Pray that they will live for God’s glory. “… the fruit of righteousness...to the glory and praise of God”

C. Do you pray for those around you everyday? Are you praying for your kids, your husband, your wife? Do you pray that they’ll be filled with love and make wise decision, do the right thing and live for the glory of God?

III. Be patient with their progress. Paul looked at people’s future and not just at their past. He looked at their potential and was patient with their progress. Vs. 6, “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Paul says what God starts, God finishes. What God started in your life at salvation He will bring it eventually to completion.

A. Human beings are great starters but bad finishers. People leave unfinished symphonies, unfinished building, unfinished books, unfinished projects. People do not always finish what they start but God always finishes what He starts.
   1. He does not make a bird and give him half a wing.
   2. He does not make an unfinished flower, and unfinished star.
   3. He puts the finishing touches on everything He does and then He says, “It is good.”

B. The Bible says when Jesus Christ starts working in your life He will complete what He started. In spite of the hang-ups, faults, my bad decisions, my sins, in spite of all the circumstances that I face in life God is going go finish what He started in my life. And in your life too! The Bible says that one day when you get to Heaven you’re going to become just like Jesus because you will see Him as He is. And that’s the goal. God starts what He finishes.

C. LESSON #3: God is not finished with people.
   1. We need to patient with people’s progress. To enjoy people we must allow for growth and for development. Paul could say, “I’m not the man I used to be, thank God. But also, thank God, I’m not the man I’m going to be. I’m growing and changing.”

D. There is no such thing as a perfect person, wife, husband or child. If you demand perfection in the people in your life in order to enjoy them you’re going to be miserable for the rest of your life.

E. Navigator stor y at Glen Eyrie.

F. Who do you need to be patient with and their progress?
   Somebody at work? Your kids? Your spouse and their progress?

IV. Love people from the heart. I’ve discovered that if people aren’t in my heart they can get on my nerves.
A. Heart love begins with understanding, knowing why they feel the way they do. Why does the guy at work act like such a jerk? Maybe you don't know the background he grew up in. Maybe he's tons better than he used to be ten years ago. You cannot love someone you don’t understand. You need to understand why people around you act the way they do. Be aware!

B. How do you love those people who, even when you do understand them, are unlovable? Vs. 8, “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.” In Greek the word “affection” is the word for “intestines.” King James translates this “bowels.” In Greek society, the Greeks thought that the seat of the emotions was in your stomach, your liver, your internal organs.

C. Paul would say, “I’ve got a gut feeling of love for you.” It is intensive love that makes me love even the unlovely. That is not a natural kind of love. It’s a supernatural love and that’s why Paul said it’s not from himself, but it’s the affection of Christ Jesus. The only kind of love that lasts and lasts in spite of heartache and difficulty in tough circumstances is God’s love – the affection of Jesus Christ.

D. LESSON #4: The secret of enjoying the people in your life is to be filled with God’s love.

1. Romans 5:5, “God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God’s gift to us.” God’s love is something He does in me and through me. I can’t work it up. It is a gift as you let the Holy Spirit live in you moment by moment.

E. Who do you need to start loving from the heart not the head?

Paul started this church; he was the founding pastor. He had these people in his heart. The word in the Bible which means “enjoying other people” is the word “fellowship”. That’s what it’s all about – enjoying your family, your church; really loving each other. That’s what fellowship is all about.

PRAYER