

**READING PLAN
FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Joy
in *the*
Faith

This family activity will end up resembling a paper chain for you to hang in your home as a reminder of the “Joy” Paul felt even though he was imprisoned in chains.

For best results, print out the pages on color paper. Next, cut each paper in thirds along the lines that separate each day’s family reading.

As a family, read each day’s scripture and discuss the question or complete the activity that goes along with the day. Then take the strip of paper and tape, glue, or staple the ends together to make a loop. After each day add the next strip of paper to create a chain.

As you add to the chain, find someplace to hang it in your home. Once your chain is completed, it will help your family remember the “Joy” Paul felt even though he was in chains.

**NOVEMBER 30
Philippians 1:1-5**

In verse 4, we read,
*“I thank my God every time
I remember you. In all my
prayers for all of you,
I always pray with joy.”*

As we read through the book of Philippians, let’s look at an acronym for Joy.

Spell **J-O-Y**.

J-Jesus:

Put Jesus first in your life. The Bible tells us the most important thing to do is love and follow God.

O-Others:

Second, love others. Help. Serve. Share. Care.

Y-You:

Finally, remember you are a beloved child of God.

DECEMBER 1
Philippians 1:6-11

Paul wrote a letter from prison to his dear friends. Write a letter to someone you love who is far away.

Let your child dictate the letter, or maybe have everyone write their own. That is what Paul would have done in prison.

As you look ahead to Christmas, have each person share a word from these first 11 verses—words like “*sharing*” from verse 5, or “*righteousness*” from verse 11.

Brainstorm ways to fit that word into your Christmas plans. Write on the ring below:

What can I do this Christmas to add more?

DECEMBER 2
Philippians 1:12-18

Verses 1:12-14 tell us about Paul’s view from prison. Whoever got him arrested wanted to stop him from telling people about Jesus. But in jail, Paul shared God’s love with guards and other prisoners.

Good things can come out of bad things. With God’s help, a problem is also an opportunity.

Share a story of a time when something good happened because of something bad.

How can you share this story as a “testimony” to share the Gospel with someone this Christmas season?

DECEMBER 3
Philippians 1:19-26

In verses 19-26, prison forces Paul to think about his own death. It all depends on the verdict. He could go free, or he could be crucified. Those are the choices.

But surprise! Paul believes he is in a win-win situation. In both life and death, he knows that God will take care of him.

Death, for Paul, is the joyous reunion with Christ, who he met on the Damascus road.

It would be the best “**J**” moment in his **J-O-Y** life.

Share about the best “Jesus” moment in your life?

This would be a great opportunity to share the gospel with your kids, if they have not invited Jesus into their heart.

DECEMBER 4
Philippians 1:27-30

Paul encourages the Philippians to “*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*”

Sometimes this can be hard, especially in the world we live in today.

Talk about something that your family does at Christmas that fits into God’s **J-O-Y** plan?

J-Jesus:

Put Jesus first in your life. The Bible tells us the most important thing to do is love and follow God.

O-Others:

Second, love others. Help. Serve. Share. Care.

Y-You:

Finally, remember you are a beloved child of God.

How can you measure what you prioritize this year along these lines?

DECEMBER 7
Philippians 2:1-2

It’s not about you.

Paul is really telling the Philippians that you can’t spell **JOY** by starting with the letter **Y**.

If we don’t think of God (verse 1) and then Others (verses 3-4), then we aren’t following God’s **J-O-Y** plan. You will not have the joyful life that God wants for us.

What are some things that make it hard to think about God first?

DECEMBER 8
Philippians 2:3-4

What do you want to get for Christmas? This is the time of the year when we make out our Christmas lists. We focus on getting.

But Christmas is about giving because it celebrates Jesus who gave Himself away— He became human, served others, died, rose, and ascended to glory for us.

One way to follow Christ on this journey is to focus on giving this Christmas. Look for ways to give together.

DECEMBER 9
Philippians 2:5-7

Verse 6 starts with Jesus being equal to God. But in the next verse Jesus chooses to become nothing!

Jesus could have come to earth as a king, but instead, he came as a servant. In fact, Jesus became so human that he even died, and not just any death, but death on a cross. That's not what we would expect a god to do!

Read or tell the story of Jesus' birth from Luke 2. Use a nativity set if you have one. This is a humble beginning.

DECEMBER 10
Philippians 2:8

Do you know what the Greek word we translate as "*took the form of*" is? It's "morph".

Verse 8 speaks of Jesus humbling himself in obedience and death. Paul probably added "*-even death on a cross*" at the end of verse 8 to make his point stronger.

The ultimate shame in Roman society was crucifixion. It was painful and very slow. More than death, this was about dishonor and disrespect.

What kind of a God submits to that!! Can you believe that Christ did that for each one of us?

Take time as a family to share how this one verse makes you feel. Then spend time thanking Jesus for His sacrifice.

DECEMBER 11
Philippians 2:9-11

The story of Christ does not end on the cross. "Name" is identity or essential character. It is who Jesus is. Jesus is what Jesus has done.

For Paul, Christ's glory is shown most fully by the humility, the obedience, and the death, as well as the glory itself.

This is the example of Christ Jesus.

While we all hope for glory, this is certainly not the kind of life our culture teaches us to desire.

How does this compare to the life you have dreamed about?

Paul is asking the Philippians—and us—to do something very difficult.

How do you feel about this challenge?

DECEMBER 14
Philippians 2:12-13

Paul talks about obeying God.
Why do you obey?
Why follow the rules?

For Paul, Christians should obey God because of the wonderful things that God had done.
Here's an easy way to remember it:
We love, we obey,
because God first loved us.

What are God's rules?
In Mark 10:25-27, we see someone asked Jesus this same question.

Read Mark 10:25-27 and discuss what Jesus said and how do we use those two things to know if we are following God's law?

DECEMBER 15
Philippians 2:14-16

Paul's love for the Philippians shows in these verses.

He asks them to "*shine like stars.*" Sometimes the world seems like a dark and scary place. In contrast, Christians are to be shining lights, showing people the way to God, and letting the light of God shine through them.

Sing, "This little light of mine."
Then let your light shine.

Adults: Can you think of a time you saw God's love shining through your child?

Share that memory with them.

Go outside on a clear night and look at the stars.

DECEMBER 16
Philippians 2:17-18

Paul knows that his life might be draining away. If he is found guilty, he will probably be executed. Even though he may die soon, he is joyful.

He is a good example that living a life of **J-O-Y** works. No matter what might happen, Paul has joy.

"So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."

Spend time worshiping by singing your favorite worship songs.

DECEMBER 17
Philippians 2:19-24

Timothy was Paul's younger co-worker. We don't know who the less faithful "*others*" are, but Paul presents Timothy as a faithful example of self-giving love. Timothy will bring word of the verdict to Philippi when the time comes.

Who is your example?

Share a story of someone who was a good example for you.

DECEMBER 18
Philippians 2:25-30

Almost accidentally, Epaphroditus (say ep-a-fro-DIE-tus. Now, say it three times, fast!) was someone who put his life on the line for his faith. Paul called him "*your messenger*," so we can guess he was a member of the Philippian congregation.

He was probably sent with a letter for Paul and an offering.

He may also have come to learn to be an apostle. Because of his sickness, Epaphroditus followed Christ almost to the point of death.

Pray for someone who is sick. How can your family bless them? (Send them a meal, card, etc.)

DECEMBER 21
Philippians 3:1-3

Paul has some very angry words for these people. What made him angry was that, for these people, being Christian wasn't about Jesus at all. It wasn't about God's love. It was about following the rules—their rules.

It sure took the **J-O-Y** out of life. You did not have to care about God. You did not have to love others. You didn't even have to believe that you were a beloved child of God. You just had to follow the rules.

Not very joyful!

What are some times you have seen yourself or others putting "rules" before God?

DECEMBER 22
Philippians 3:4-7

Paul let go of all the good things he did in the past to focus on Jesus. In fact, he throws them in the garbage can.

They aren't really gone, of course. All those things, good and bad, happened. They were an important part of who Paul was. But, compared to Jesus, none of that stuff really mattered.

Unlike the troublemakers, Paul knew what was important.

Question:

What makes you proud of yourself? Are you good at a sport? At math? Playing a game? Being a good friend?

If you follow Paul's example, you will be proud of yourself. But you will also be willing to let go—to put that in the garbage—if it gets between you and God.

DECEMBER 23
Philippians 3:8-11

Paul wants us to imitate Christ by putting aside all the things we are proud of, serve others, and even be willing to suffer so that we will be like Jesus.

For Paul, faith is active. Faith isn't something you talk about—it is something you do. You follow the leader, Jesus.

Challenge:

Find a container and some paper. Put in things that you should give up, like putting people down. Put in bad attitudes. But, also add things that are good in themselves, but bad if you let them get between you and God.

DECEMBER 24
Philippians 3:12-16

For Paul, life is like a race. But it is not about winning. It is about running your best and getting the prize—being with Jesus—at the end. Paul already knew how wonderful that was, he had met Jesus face to face on the Damascus Road. He was eager to meet Jesus again.

For Paul, faith is active. Faith isn't something you talk about—it is something you do. You follow the leader, Jesus.

Challenge:

What are some ways you can stretch and grow your faith the same way runners have to train for a race physically?

DECEMBER 25
Philippians 3:17-21

Again and again, the Philippians are told to follow Paul, follow Timothy, follow Epaphroditus, and especially, to follow Jesus Christ.

They have a choice. They can live like citizens of heaven or they can live earthly lives. One choice brings a life of **J-O-Y**. The other does not.

Every day we make lots of choices that show what is important to us. Share examples as a family.

On this day, what was one way God showed how important we are to Him?

DECEMBER 28
Philippians 4:1-3

How would you like your name read aloud during the church service because you had been fighting?

That's what happened to Euodia and Syntyche. Worse yet, everyone who has read the Bible for all these years knows they were fighting.

We don't know the beginning of their story, and we don't know the end.

What do you think happened after Paul's letter was read?

DECEMBER 29
Philippians 4:4-7

This passage is a wonderful little summary of Philippians with a repeated command to rejoice, to live a life of prayer, and Paul's heartfelt blessing.

What is most meaningful to you in this paragraph?

How would you like to be known to the world?

What sort of reputation would you like your congregation to have in the world?

Is it hard to not be anxious?

What are some ways you can remind each other to be in prayer in every situation?

DECEMBER 30
Philippians 4:8-9

These verses are wonderful instructions to the Philippians.

Fill out the words from verse 8:

Name something true:

Something noble:

Something right:

Something pure:

Something lovely:

Something worthy of respect:

Something excellent:

Something worthy of praise:

What does advertising want you to think about? Media?

The next time you watch something, give it the Philippian's test. Does it help you think about things that are true, right, worthy of respect, etc.?

DECEMBER 31
Philippians 4:10-13

Lots of people today think that stuff makes people happy. The more money or stuff you have, the happier you will be. Is this really true?

Paul thinks you will be happier—joyful in fact—if you give yourself away in service. What do you think?

What's more important than having stuff?

When is enough, enough? —or too much?

JANUARY 1
Philippians 4:14-23

The Philippians were a generous congregation, and Paul wanted them to know that he was proud of them. They are a good example for themselves and others. The Philippians were cheerful givers; they shared willingly.

Is it easy or hard for you to share?

In 4.19, Paul promises the Philippians wonderful riches. Do you think Paul means money?

How else can people be rich? Rich in friends? Rich in ideas? Health? Rich in God's love?

How many ways to be rich can you list?