

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are the cultural, personal, or other dynamics that hold us back from living out these three qualities (i.e. rejoicing, constant prayer, and thankfulness in all circumstances) that Paul states should be normal, everyday Christianity?

2. Who do you know that exemplifies one or more of these qualities? Describe or explain.

3. Go around the group and process together the three reflection questions in the sermon outline together.

4. Do you have the relationships and intentionality built into your lifestyle that can keep you coming back to questions like this? Describe or explain.



Gateway to God's Presence

Nathan Carroll ~ February 5, 2017

What practices enable us to enter into a _____ and normative experience of life in God's _____ (aka: life in the river)?

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT

"...FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU." (v18)

These realities are not intended to be secondary or supplementary parts of the _____, but meant to be the norm - the _____ of all who are made alive in Christ.

Challenge #1:

We restrict our engagement of rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving to _____ settings, prescribed forms at prescribed times.

Challenge #2:

We live in a culture that so elevates our _____ world that we struggle to see any value in engaging in anything that we don't "feel like".

“ALWAYS BE JOYFUL.” (v16) [translated elsewhere as, ‘rejoice always’]

Any true experience of joy comes from God and is meant to be _____ . (John 15:9-11; James 1:17; 1 Peter 1:8)

Joy is not dependent on our _____ circumstances, but on our _____ circumstances. Our great hope and example of this is Jesus.

...And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame.

Hebrews 12:1-2b NLT

Nothing has set apart apprentices of Jesus throughout the world and throughout all of history like the ability to rejoice while _____. (Hebrews 10:34; 1 Peter 1:6; Jude 1:24)

Question:

What God-given reason do you have to celebrate today?

How have you/will you celebrate?

“NEVER STOP PRAYING.” (v17)

Life lived in the river is a life of _____ with God.

This is the only means by which we can persevere in our journey of being _____ through apprenticeship to Jesus. (Romans 12:2 & 12; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2)

This is because prayer jars us into awareness of God’s constant _____ and _____ - especially necessary when we are suffering.

Jesus’ life of constant dialogue with God underpins his darkest hour of _____ and _____. (Luke 22:41-44; Luke 23:33-34; Luke 23:46)

You will never find yourself in a circumstance in which God is _____ or _____ to talk.

Question:

How aware of God’s presence have you been this past week? What could you do to increase your awareness?

“BE THANKFUL IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES...” (v18)

Thankfulness keeps us _____ to God as the source of our hope and _____ - in our immediate circumstances and, most importantly, in our eternal circumstances. (i.e. Romans 8:18-39)

Thankfulness will naturally flow out of _____ and living in constant dialogue with Jesus. (Hebrews 12:28; Colossians 3:14-16; 2 Corinthians 4:15)

Jesus had a thanksgiving _____ in times of both joy and sorrow. (Luke 10:21; John 11:41-42)

Question:

Have you taken time to consider what you have to be thankful for and then taken further time to express it to God (and perhaps to others to whom you owe thanks)?
