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WHISTLING IN THE DARK

The Book of Philippians

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Part 17: Loosening My Grip
Philippians 4:14-19

For most of us, getting our circumstances just right is one of our main preoccupations. Why? Because most of us believe the only place we'll be able to find joy is in the midst of ideal circumstances—when everything, or almost everything, is going our way. As a result, since we live in a world full of difficult or puzzling circumstances and events, we end up assuming that satisfying joy is difficult, if not impossible, to come by.

Paul's letter to the believers in the city of Philippi delivers a lethal blow to that assumption. The book is a powerful portrayal of joy. A major component of its power is the circumstance from which Paul is writing. Many would *expect* a book about joy in the Bible. But the impact of the message of Philippians is that Paul is writing this letter, about joy, from prison!

Following Jesus Christ and growing in amazement over His grace involves many discoveries. One such discovery is the realization that authentic, abiding joy is Christ-centered. It transcends circumstances. Christ's joy doesn't necessarily mean a smile; His joy can be experienced in the darkest of situations. That is why following Jesus Christ in a fallen world enables us to "whistle in the dark."

In the first chapter of the letter, we discovered that whistling in the dark involves living a life that *revolves* around Christ. In the second chapter, we found that whistling involves living a life that *reflects* Christ, especially in our relationships with others. In chapter three, we discovered the importance of a life that *relates* with Christ when we are learning to whistle. In chapter four, we will look at the fourth key: *relying* on Christ.

Paul begins chapter four by acknowledging the necessity of relying on Christ in our relationships as we labor for the cause of the gospel. He then deals very specifically with the close connection between our willingness to rely on Christ and the level of peace we are experiencing in our journey. Beginning in verse 10, he talks about the beauty of relying on Christ instead of relying on counterfeit sources of satisfaction. As he brings the letter to a close, he deals with the intimate relationship between authentic contentment and generosity.

When I rely on Christ—instead of “stuff”—for my contentment, the result will be a generosity that frees me to experience four privileges:

1. _____ . (v. 14-16)

2. _____ . (v. 17)

3. _____ . (v. 18)

4. _____ . (v. 19)