

## Train Your Brain

### Philippians 4:2-9

1. What resonated with you as you worked through the daily devotional readings this week?
2. Pastor Mark points out that joy is not a response to pleasant or happy circumstances, but rather a disposition of the heart and mind that we bring into our circumstances. Do you agree or disagree, why or why not?
3. We all have patterns of thought that become habitual. Can you identify some habitual thoughts that you often experience? Do they make you more or less joyful?
4. The Apostle Paul writes a joyful letter to the Philippians, encouraging them to remain joyful. And yet, Paul wrote this letter while stuck in a Roman prison. Can you recall someone who encouraged and inspired you even though they were in very difficult circumstances themselves? What was that like?
5. Read Philippians 4:8. Why do you think it is sometimes difficult for us to focus our thoughts on what is good, right, pure, lovely, admirable and praiseworthy?
6. Pastor Mark tells the humorous story about parents who had two sons, one was very negative and the other was overly positive. For Christmas, the negative boy got an iPhone, how did he respond? The positive boy got a box of dead horseflies. How did he respond? While none of us probably lives to either extreme, which of the two boys do you tend to be? Why do you think that is?
7. Paul explained to the Philippians how God was doing great things in the midst of this unfair imprisonment. Think of an area/circumstance in your life where you might be frustrated or disappointed, and ask "What's good about this?" Share some of those answers with your group.
8. Another great question to ask when we find ourselves in frustrating or disappointing circumstances is this: "What can I be thankful for right now?" Think of an area/circumstance/situation in your life where you would benefit from asking that question. What kind of answers come to mind? Share with the group.
9. Cultivating joy doesn't require us to pretend that life has no sorrow or pain, but it does help us train our brain to think differently in the midst of the sorrow and pain. When we learn to think differently, we begin to see God at work in ways we never noticed before. Share an area/circumstance in your life where you need to train your brain to start thinking differently.