

Title	Predicting The Future
Text	Philippians 1:12-26
Date	17 January 2021



The questions below are designed to be used by OCC LIFEGroups as they meet during the week following the Sunday morning message. The intent is not for groups to answer every question, but for leaders to use the questions as a guide as they tailor the discussion to the unique needs of their group.

The Sunday message and these questions can be found each week at occweb.org/sermons.

OVERVIEW

If you were going to sit down and write a short description of what you wanted your future to look like, what words would you choose? Let me suggest four that come straight out of Paul's experience: *joy*, *confidence*, *hope*, and *life*. After musing over past events that brought him to prison, Paul looks ahead to his uncertain future. But these four words sum up what he expected his future to include – even if it meant his possible execution.

TEXT

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Introduction – connect with your group

- Kids are notorious for acting out when things don't go their way.
As an adult, what are some default ways you respond when things don't go the way you want?
If you're comfortable doing so, give your group a recent example of how you responded, and what happened after that.
- If you were to sit down and write a short description of what you wanted your future to look like, what words would you choose?
Pastor Mike suggested four that come straight out of Paul's experience: *joy, confidence, hope, and life*.
After musing over past events that brought him to prison, Paul looked ahead to his uncertain future. But these four words sum up what he expected his future to include—even if it meant his possible execution.
- What's at the center of your life? How can you (and others) tell?
- What do you worry about the most?
- What do you get angry about if you can't have it?

Looking at the Text

- Read Philippians 1:12-26
- Are there words, phrases or ideas that pastor Mike used that you didn't understand?
- What is one thing that stuck out to you from the message?
- 4 key words:
 - **Joy** (v. 18b): Joy Is an Act of the Will
 - **Confidence** (v. 19): Confidence Is Developed by Prayer and Provision
 - **Hope** (v. 20): Hope Looks for Opportunities to Point to Christ
 - **Life** (v. 21): Life Happens Even in the Face of Death

Joy

- Paul spoke of the past up until the phrase "*Yes, and will rejoice*" (Philippians 1:18b). Then he began looking to the future. His first future declaration focused on joy, a word used many times in Philippians.
- Paul was determined that all that had happened to him—arrest, prison, persecution, shipwreck, and imprisonment while awaiting trial with Caesar Nero—was not going to bring him down.
- He told his audience—including us—that nothing and no one would steal his joy; it was fixed on and in the Lord.
- Joy is a choice, an act of the will, internally triggered, tied to your relationship with God, and your reaction to being justified by faith.
- Joy is commonly defined as a feeling of great pleasure.
Discuss the difference between joy (internal) and happiness (external).

Confidence

- Notice Paul's use of the phrase "*I know*" in verse 19. There was certainty in Paul's outlook that was determined by his up-look; he kept his eyes on God.
- The word "*deliverance*" is a Greek word commonly used for salvation. Paul was not using it in the sense of being saved—he was already a Christian—but in the sense of being rescued: he believed that God would deliver him—"*whether by life or by death*" (v. 20).
- Paul's confidence was twofold: It was based on the prayers of God's people.
Why should we pray?
 - Spiritual work requires spiritual tools. Prayer produces confidence.
 - It was also based on the provision of God's Spirit. The word supply means a lavish supply, like a harmony of voices.

- We can be confident because God will provide all we need through the Spirit.
- Confidence is the belief that one can rely on someone or something, a firm trust. Discuss how our confidence, like Paul's, can be firmly placed in Christ. What characteristics of Christ lead to confidence?

Hope

- Hope is an earnest expectation, a gaze at something in the distance. Paul was looking to Christ with undivided attention; more than anything, he wanted to be a faithful witness.
- Part of Paul's witness was boldness.
- Notice the words "*Christ will be exalted.*" The Greek word here is "*magnified*" which means to make great, to enlarge. How can we possibly make Christ greater?
- Present your body as a living sacrifice (cf Romans 12:1). Let your hands, feet, and tongue—your whole body—be used for Christ's glory.
- The writer of Hebrews linked confidence, hope, and assurance together (see Hebrews 11:1). Discuss how these words are connected. How do confidence, hope, and assurance define our present circumstances and our future reality?

Life

- Jesus was the highest value of Paul's life, his motto, and his fuel to persevere.
- Verse 21 demonstrates that Paul's master passion was Jesus. Despite not knowing the circumstances his life would take, Paul knew what his goal was while he still lived: he lived for Christ, and he died for Christ under Nero.
- In one brutal moment, Paul went from the imperial city of Rome to the eternal city of God. Tradition holds that Paul was beheaded; in that instant, he gained eternal life.
- How can we live for Christ in today's world? How is dying a gain for Christians?
- If you're not dead yet, God's not done with you yet. If you were to make a bucket list of how you want to help others before you die, what would be on that list?
- Can you say for sure that you'll spend eternity in heaven? What are some favorite passages of Scripture that give you confidence in your heavenly future?
- Using just one or two words, tell your group what you're looking forward to most about heaven.

PRAY WITH EACH OTHER

Pray that your group will live to make Jesus large in every area of your lives (marriage, parenting, friendships, school, relationships, work, online interactions etc.).

THIS WEEK

- Read the letter/book of Philippians – it's only 4 chapters.
- **Connect Up:** In addition to the words discussed in this study (*joy, confidence, hope, and life*), what are some other characteristics that define believers (see Galatians 5:22-23)? How do they help us maintain an eternal perspective, focusing our attention on Christ and not on the world—providing us with a proper "*up-look*"?
- **Connect In:** In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul tells the church to not be like those who don't have hope. In these verses, Paul linked our hope to Christ's return. How is the 2nd coming of Jesus intricately linked to a believer's hope for the future?
- **Connect Out:** In a world where many have no future or hope, how can we use this message to communicate to unbelievers that God does have a beautiful future for those who believe? What verses can you use to point people to Jesus?