



*The #1 catalyst for spiritual growth is reading and reflecting on the Bible.  
Use these questions for personal study or as part of a community group experience.*

**WEEK 6**

**05/28/2017**

**Note to Leaders:** This is the final week of “Just Dance”. Be sure to communicate with your group whether you will be taking a break for summer, continuing or having a modified summer schedule. The goal of this week’s message is to provide a proper perspective for finding hope and healing.

These questions provide a framework to prompt or foster discussion in your group. Don’t feel you have to use all or any of these questions! Use the questions that best fit your group and let discussion flow.

### **Sermon Questions**

1. What were your initial thoughts following Derek’s message?
2. Could you see this message impacting your relationships? How?
3. Derek read Philippians 4:8, is there anything that stands out to you from this passage? Why?

### **Message Outline**

See outline on sermon message page: <http://trygrace.org/messages/>

### **Discussion Questions**

1. If you’ve been following the “Just Dance” series, have you tried implementing any of the information shared? If so, would you feel comfortable sharing your experience?
2. Do you feel that the principles and biblical passages shared over the past couple of weeks fits with the common perception of marriage? How does it comport or remain distinct?
3. Thinking about the power of perspective, where does the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and faith factor in?
4. What strengths or weaknesses do you see in the approach of “accentuating the positive”?

5. How could your perspective and relationship change if you practiced the policy of 5-to-1? (Five positive actions to every one negative action)
6. Where there any positive-focused, practical actions that you found helpful or surprising?
7. Why is the concept, “Your spouse is not your enemy” so powerful?
8. When you have been hurt by someone, how does the repair process begin?
9. Read Philippians 4:4-9. What things from this passage stand out to you?
10. This passage was written during a period of intense suffering to a people who were opposed by those in their community. This passage challenges them, despite their suffering and opposition, to rejoice and keep their mind focused on the positive. How is this possible? What often keeps us from doing this?

#### Background Comments

The letter to the Philippians was likely written sometime around AD 55-61, while Paul was in-and-out of imprisonment. Additionally, these years represent an increasing tension between Jewish and Christian communities—both of which are in tension with Rome. The Jewish Revolt against Rome would reach its climax in AD 66-70. This would have ramifications throughout the Roman empire, in which both Judaism and Christianity were targeted. Through all of this persecution, Paul has a challenging message to those who follow Jesus: “rejoice, be strong but gentle, and focus on those things that are true, honorable, just, pure and commendable.”

Philippians 4:4 speaks to the challenge of their situation. The double imperative to “rejoice” surpasses their emotional disposition, and reorients one’s trust in God through whom all things will be made right and whole. This is not immunity to sorrow nor a disconnected-from-reality mindset. Instead its hope is found in the promises of God and the intentional meditations of one’s heart and mind on truth. The phrase “dwell on these things” introduces an important truth: spiritual stability is a result of how a person thinks. The verb “dwell” is an imperative, which conveys the essential aspect of proper thinking. This is not simply positive thinking but critical and purposeful thinking—“to evaluate,” “to consider,” or “to calculate”. This contrasts a life driven or lived by feelings, which leads to instability in faith and in our relationships.

There are several words in Philippians 4:4-9 that have a powerful impact on our relationships: gentleness, true, honorable, pleasing, commendable and worthy of praise.

Again, Paul writes these words to Christians who are being confronted by enemies, both physical and spiritual. How much more so do these apply in regard to our spouse, who is not our enemy but our teammate. “Gentleness” speaks of being yielding, kind and forbearing. Involved is the willingness to yield one’s personal rights and to show consideration to others. “True” has the sense of valid, reliable and honest. “Honorable” refers to a quality that makes them worthy of respect. In times of conflict, it is often difficult to find these qualities. For each person in the marriage, the goal is to view the value and worth of their spouse through the perspective of God, who creates, cherishes and cares for each person. Additionally, one must find and focus on that which is “pleasing” or “lovely” in their spouse. This parallels with those things that are commendable or worthy of praise.

These standards are set forth in scripture. As the individual orients their life and thoughts toward these things they begin to see the spirit work and develop these virtues in their life. Similarly, as the individual pursues and focuses on these things—choosing to highlight the positive in their spouse—their negative mindset and emotions toward their spouse often begin to change. Once this process begins, it breaks the cycle of finding and dwelling on the negative where every action is soon interpreted through a negative lens (considered a negative confirmation bias). This requires work, prayer, personal transformation, breaking patterns of thought and habits. But the effort is worth the reward.

### **Prayer Requests**

Take a few minutes to go around the room and ask for prayers. Write these down as they are being shared. Additionally, challenge people to begin praying about the step of boldness God may be calling them to during this series. Finally, pray together. You can pray the prayer below or your own prayer that incorporates the requests represented in the group.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, I choose to focus on you and meditate on your Scripture. Help me to find peace in you and seek the positive in others. Guard my heart and mind against the negative habits, beliefs and fears that pull at my relationships. I ask that you would transform my life and renew my mind through your Spirit. In Jesus name I pray, amen.