an invitation to joy

SOUL CARE
You are invited to attend The Clearing, a contemplative worship experience held the 2nd Saturday of every month at the

**Vineyard Church of Augusta**
3126 Parrish Rd., Augusta GA 30907

**-OR-**

**Online**
Please check our website the week prior to confirm the format.

**From 9-10 am**

The next Clearing will be held on:

**February 13th**

Please join us as we rest from the noise and busyness of life. Prayer prompts and Scripture meditation exercises are offered as an invitation to be still in God’s presence.

Questions? Please contact:
Michelle Bauer
706.863.9766 - michelle@vineyardaugusta.org
Looking for a place to call home?

Join us Sundays @ 10 AM
In person or online at Facebook Live
Vineyard Church of Augusta

Nursery through middle school ministry
at each celebration.

Small group opportunities
throughout the week.

For more information, please call 706.863.9766
or go online: vineyardaugusta.org

3126 Parrish Rd., Augusta, GA
Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your strength.
Deuteronomy 6:5

So often we hear this familiar verse as a command – something to be obeyed. But what if we heard it as an invitation? God, who loves you with all of his heart, soul and strength, is inviting you to love him back. That changes everything!

If your desire is to accept this divine invitation then we must begin to prepare our hearts and souls and bodies for the task of loving well. For many, it is easier to think about strengthening our bodies than it is our souls. We are grateful for opportunities to build muscle and condition our cardiovascular systems. If we aren’t careful, though, our souls are left behind.

This series of booklets has been designed as tool to care for your soul. Or better yet, as a tool that will allow God to care for your soul. When you are able, find a few moments in a quiet space to talk with and listen to God. We trust that God will be waiting to meet you there.

If you would like to talk with someone about your faith or would like someone to pray for you, you are invited to send an email to prayer@vineyardaugusta.org.
joy

noun
a deep feeling or condition of happiness or contentment

Everyone wants to have joy. Finding it is hard, though. Sometimes we feel joyful for a moment or two and then we lose it again.

We look for joy in exotic vacation destinations, at a sporting event or at our favorite restaurant. The world tells us that joy comes from success and material things. But that doesn’t seem to work either. It’s all very confusing.

You are invited this month to spend some time discovering what God says about the true source of joy. We will focus on four passages in the book of Philippians that offer God’s wisdom on living a life of joy.

We hope that you will accept God’s Invitation to Joy.
Philippians 1: 1-6 and 9-10

1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Jesus Christ at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3. I thank my God every time I remember you. 4. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5. Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

9. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10. so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.
Week One  
**Sunday, January 31st – Saturday, February 6th**

When you are able, find a quiet spot and spend a few moments alone with God.

**Quiet**  
Once you have found a comfortable place, spend a few moments in silence. Take a few deep breaths and feel your body begin to relax. When you feel your mind becoming quiet, offer a simple prayer to God, thanking him for his presence and inviting him to speak to you.

**Read**  
Slowly read through Philippians 1: 1-6 and 9-10.

*The complete text of this passage has been included on the preceding page.*

**Ponder**  
Sunday: Paul blesses his readers with grace and peace. How are you experiencing God’s grace today? In what ways are you feeling his peace? In what ways are you needing more of God’s grace and peace today?

Monday: What has the Lord begun in you that you are waiting to have completed? Take a moment to thank him for beginning the work. How has the waiting for completion been?

Tuesday: How hard or easy is it for you to be confident that the Lord will complete his work in your life? What would you like to say to him about the timeline?

Wednesday: Paul’s prayer is that our love would grow more and more over time. In what ways are you more loving than you were a year ago? 6 months ago? What do you attribute this growth to? If you aren’t seeing growth, what do you think is getting in the way?
Thursday: The word “knowledge” in verse 9 means knowing gained through experience. What are you learning about God as you personally experience him? If you desire a deeper experience with God, talk to him about that today.

Friday: To discern is to know God’s will in a situation. In what areas of your life would you like to be able to discern what is best? What makes discernment in those areas hard? What would the results of discerning correctly be?

Saturday: What keys to joyful living do you see in this week’s passage? Think back through this week’s ponderings and ask the Spirit to highlight one area that he would like to touch. Offer a prayer of surrender.

Quiet
Offer your ponderings to God and ask him to speak to you.

Pray
Offer a prayer in words to God. Thank him for his presence. Express your desire to experience his presence in an even deeper way.

Leave this quiet time trusting that the seeds of joy have been planted.
Philippians 2: 3-11

3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6. Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7. but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! 9. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10. that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11. and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
**Week Two**  
**Sunday, February 7th – Saturday, February 13th**

When you are able, find a quiet spot and spend a few moments alone with God.

**Quiet**  
Once you have found a comfortable place, spend a few moments in silence. Take a few deep breaths and feel your body begin to relax. When you feel your mind becoming quiet, offer a simple prayer to God, thanking him for his presence and inviting him to speak to you.

**Read**  
Slowly read through Philippians 2:3-11.

*The complete text of this passage has been included on the preceding page.*

**Ponder**  
Sunday: Jesus is the ultimate example of a life defined by humility. How does choosing to set aside time each week to rest an act of humility? What do you enjoy about your Sabbath practice? What makes resting difficult for you?

Monday: Many of us are unaware of the more subtle ways in which we put ourselves first. Are you willing to ask the Spirit to point out selfishness in your actions and attitudes this week? You can be sure that he will do it gently and kindly.

Tuesday: What do you find yourself grasping at? Success? Power? The perfect body? When did that grasping start? Ask God to help you stop grasping for what is out of reach and patiently wait for his good gifts.
Wednesday: Take a moment to imagine a servant. What do servants do? How do they dress? How do they present themselves? What about being a servant sounds appealing? What resistance do you notice in yourself to being servant-like?

Thursday: What in your life is God putting to death? How does that feel? What parts of you are resisting his work? What parts of you are responding with obedience?

Friday: Jesus had to suffer the cross before he felt the joy of resurrection. Ask the Spirit what he would like to show you through Jesus’ example. What parts of you is God resurrecting?

Saturday: Humility. Service. Death. These may seem like unusual topics to include in a focus on the topic of joy! What are you noticing about God’s unique path to a joy-filled life?

**Quiet**
Offer your ponderings to God and ask him to speak to you.

**Pray**
Offer a prayer in words to God. Thank him for his presence. Express your desire to experience his presence in an even deeper way.

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*Leave this quiet time trusting that the seeds of joy have been planted.*
Philippians 3: 7-14

7. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9. and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11. and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13. Brothers (and sisters), I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Week Three  
**Sunday, February 14**th – **Saturday, February 20**th

When you are able, find a quiet spot and spend a few moments alone with God.

**Quiet**
Once you have found a comfortable place, spend a few moments in silence. Take a few deep breaths and feel your body begin to relax. When you feel your mind becoming quiet, offer a simple prayer to God, thanking him for his presence and inviting him to speak to you.

**Read**
Slowly read through Philippians 3:7-14.

_The complete text of this passage has been included on the preceding page._

**Ponder**
Sunday: The Sabbath was created by God for joy. How does resting lead to joy for you? What happens to your joy when you go for too long without a rest?

Monday: Paul is telling us that everything in his life, no matter how great it is, doesn’t compare with knowing Christ. Spend some time today making a list of things that are good but not as great as knowing God. What on the list is surprising to you?

Tuesday: “I want to know Christ.” Remember, when Paul uses the word “know” he means to know through first-hand experience. In what ways do you sense God revealing himself to you? What are you learning about him? What would you like to experience more of?

Wednesday: The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is offered to you. What situation in your life would benefit from that kind of resurrecting power? What do you envision the result would be?
Thursday: What from the past do you need to let go of? What makes that hard? What might you gain from the release?

Friday: Paul describes moving through the hardships of his life as “pressing on”. What are you pressing through right now? It is possible to feel joy even in the middle of struggle. Where are you seeing signs of joy in your life?

Saturday: We want to get right to joy but Paul is showing us that the path to joy leads through struggle and loss. How do you feel about that? When have you experienced this to be true? What did you learn through that experience?

Quiet
Offer your ponderings to God and ask him to speak to you.

Pray
Offer a prayer in words to God. Thank him for his presence. Express your desire to experience his presence in an even deeper way.

Leave this quiet time trusting that the seeds of joy have been planted.
Philippians 4: 4-9

4. Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! 5. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8. Finally, brothers (and sisters), whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. 9. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.
Week Four
Sunday, February 21st – Saturday, February 27th

When you are able, find a quiet spot and spend a few moments alone with God.

Quiet
Once you have found a comfortable place, spend a few moments in silence. Take a few deep breaths and feel your body begin to relax. When you feel your mind becoming quiet, offer a simple prayer to God, thanking him for his presence and inviting him to speak to you.

Read
Slowly read through Philippians 4: 4-9.

*The complete text of this passage has been included on the preceding page.*

Ponder
Sunday: Rejoicing is a great Sabbath activity! What would you like to rejoice in today? What is your favorite way to rejoice? If you are open, experiment with a new way of rejoicing – write a poem, sing a song, or paint a picture.

Monday: Think of someone you would describe as gentle. What stands out about them? What draws you to them? What risks does gentleness present? In what ways are you a gentle person? In what ways could you be more gentle?

Tuesday: The Lord is near. In what ways do you feel the Lord’s nearness? If you are comfortable, close your eyes and use your divinely created imagination to see Jesus with you. Where is he? What would he like to say to you? How do you feel in his presence?
Wednesday: What are you anxious about today? How does that anxiety affect your joy? Offer your fears to the Lord today? Practice leaving them in his care every time you feel the anxious thoughts returning.

Thursday: God offers his peace to stand guard at the door of your mind. What kinds of thoughts would you like for him to keep out today? What would you like for him to protect your heart from?

Friday: Take a moment to review your day, what dominated your thinking? What categories did your thoughts fit into? Were they noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy? How could you use this checklist to bring your mind traffic under control?

Saturday: We have seen this week that our thoughts affect our joy. What effects does your thought life have on your joy? Spend some moments in quiet today asking the Spirit what adjustments he’d like to make to increase your joy.

Quiet
Offer your ponderings to God and ask him to speak to you.

Pray
Offer a prayer in words to God. Thank him for his presence. Express your desire to experience his presence in an even deeper way.

Leave this quiet time trusting that the seeds of joy have been planted.
God Loves You

It’s simple but true. You are loved by God – no matter who you are, what you’ve done, who you’ve disappointed, or what you have suffered.

Unlike others who may say they love you and fail to show it, God demonstrated his love for you by sending his son, Jesus, to earth to give his life as a ransom for yours.

Jesus died and was raised to life by his loving Father not as a one-time, show-off move but as an example of what God wants to do in your life. He wants to give you new life.

The invitation has been offered. How will you respond?

Maybe you are ready to tell Jesus that you want him to be your Savior and Lord? Maybe you want to begin a conversation with God?

Whatever your next step is, you will find God ready and waiting to listen and respond to you.

If you have questions or would like to talk about your next step with someone, please email us at prayer@vineyardaugusta.org.