

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Philippians 1:22-30**  
“**Being a Godly Mentor**”

The Bible has several examples of godly mentors guiding younger people (e.g., Elisha with Elijah, Timothy with his mother and grandmother, Joshua with Moses). If you have gained experience as a Christian, then you have something very valuable to pass on to others. And if you are younger, then be sure to really appreciate the experience of older, godly people in your life. From this passage, I'd like to look at four steps you can take to help be a godly mentor to someone else.

**1: Let them know you're there for them (v22-24).** I believe Paul is saying that **he lives** just for the "here and now"—that is, **in the flesh**, then **this is the fruit of his labour**: imprisonment, abandonment by friends, etc. What kind of reward is that? Similarly, the world may wonder why in the world a Christian would refuse to bake a cake for a homosexual wedding, especially if they stand firm in the face of persecution. They may wonder why a Christian would ever hold to the Bible, even when it causes their friends to abandon them. Sadly, even others in the church sometimes think, "If you were really in the will of God, things would be going better for you." I'm sure Paul had some who thought that about him. So the shock comes when Paul says, "**yet what I shall choose I wot not**"; isn't the choice obvious? Doesn't he want to go straight to heaven now, rather than suffering in prison longer? But Paul says that to him the choice *isn't* obvious, and we'll see why. He is living for something far greater than the "here and now."

**(v23)** Paul is torn **between two** possibilities—on the one hand, he does **have a desire to depart** and to throw off those prison chains. There are a lot of godly Christians in pain on hospital beds; Christians in rough family situations; others in prison.

How great it will be just to throw all of the bad stuff behind! And better still, **to be with Christ**; going to a fun place isn't nearly as fun if you're by yourself; but with a great person or group of people, it becomes all the more fun. Heaven will be incredible because Jesus Christ will be there with us, as well as all our real Christian friends. It will be **far better** than life on earth, even on our best days! Our hearts will experience wonderful feelings that we couldn't possibly imagine until we get there.

**(v24)** Paul can't wait for heaven, but he wants to remain **in the flesh** for one reason: it was **more needful** for the church. Many godly mentors are unaware of their importance to others; so one way you can encourage them, especially if they are feeling useless, is to let them know that you *need* them still, as this church needed Paul. Don't ever treat older Christians as though they are no longer useful to God's kingdom. And if you are that older, godly Christian, realize how special you are, and let others know that you're there for them until Jesus calls you home.

**2: Let them know you're happy to see them (v25-26).** Paul knows that his mentorship will bring them **joy**. If you don't have the joy of the Lord as much as you should, maybe you're not looking for other godly, older Christians to help mentor you.

**(v26)** Joy isn't so much an on/off switch; it can grow **more abundant**—more like an adjustable brightness knob. How "bright" is your **rejoicing**? Is there quite a bit of room to turn it higher? Another source of joy is seeing other Christians that you haven't seen for a while, which is very refreshing (Proverbs 25:25).

Are you the type of person that is happy to see other godly Christians, trying to make them feel welcome and fellowshiping with them if you have the opportunity? Paul wasn't a cold, unfeeling sort of person. He was talking about what a joyful time it would be when they saw each other again. Let's strive to be warm, friendly people at heart (although it's perfectly fine to be shy but sweet), not cold and uncaring. Being that way will help us to be more joyful in our hearts.

**3: Encourage them to live godly lives (v27).** Paul encourages the Philippians to live right. Just as a prince has to live extra carefully to be sure that nothing brings shame to the name of his family, so a real Christian needs to be careful not to dishonour God with even the *appearance* of evil. Our **conversation**, or lifestyle, should **become the gospel of Christ**. Would a Christian really use that kind of language? Would a priest of God really make that kind of sacreligious joke? Would a king or a queen use that tone of voice? Should an ambassador of God really go to *that* place? I heard that the American vice president walked out of a sports game where the team's players were disrespecting the country's anthem and flag. Would a representative of the kingdom of God sit through that movie which grossly dishonours God and His Word, or get up and walk out in protest?

And what does Paul say is the result of living godly lives? We can have unity **in one spirit**; we really "connect" with others who are living the same way; and we also have **one mind**, agreeing doctrinally, because we are on the same page and heart in wanting the gospel to spread. What a difference of opinion between Paul and many liberal pastors and leaders today! Many people today think that the problem holding their church back is the group of sweet, older, more holy church members, or the young conservative families; "If only they would be 'team players' and learn to enjoy this music and stop feeling uncomfortable"; or, "If only they wouldn't always get so uptight when I promote certain TV shows from the pulpit; *then* we could really move forward." Not according to Paul. The path to unity is examining our lives and standards and making sure they are "becoming" to the gospel of Christ. Only that will bring true Christian unity (rather than superficial "country club" unity) in promoting the gospel.

**4: Comfort them in persecution (v28-30).** When we hear about what **our adversaries** are doing to Christians around the world, it's easy to become **terrified** and worry; we hear about beheadings of Christians

in the Middle East, or imprisonment in China and in various other places around the world. Yet even when genocidal dictators rise to power, or when Congress passes laws meant to restrict our liberties, we should be terrified **in nothing**. Yet the fact we are sometimes terrified is an **evident token** that our enemies are headed toward destruction; based on how they're acting, they might as well be wearing t-shirts with bold letters saying, "I'm headed for hell". God takes it very seriously when an enemy terrifies His children. Yet **to us**, this is an evident token **of salvation**: having the devil for an enemy is a good thing, since it means you're not on his team anymore.

**(v29)** Some people think Christians are supposed to get along with the world and have an easy life without persecution; but if someone does not **suffer for Christ's sake**, he or she should not be applauded, but warned (Luke 6:26). Joining God's army doesn't mean simply being issued a ceremonial uniform; it means picking up a weapon and entering combat. For good reason, the symbol of Christianity is a *cross*, which implies suffering (Hebrews 12:2, II Timothy 3:12).

**(v30)** Though we are separated from other Christians by thousands of miles across continents, yet all true Christians are fighting **the same conflict**, against the same enemy who simply has unequal opportunity in different areas of the world. Are you part of that same conflict in your small pocket of the world? Are you willing to stand up for Jesus and the Bible, even if others make fun of you?

In closing, to be a godly mentor, (1) Try to be there for the younger people who need your wisdom; and younger people, appreciate your mentors' importance; (2) Try to be happy to see other people when possible; (3) Rather than flatter others, encourage them to live godly lives (and don't resent your own mentors for challenging you in this area); and, (4) Prepare them for the persecutions of being a Christian, and comfort them when they go through it.