Introduction: A Tale of Two Fires

The Divine Equation: C + P = E

Circumstance + Perspective = Experience

Living above my circumstances occurs when my Perspective interprets my circumstances rather than my Circumstances determining my perspective.

The Fundamental Question: How can we develop the kind of perspective that transcends our circumstances?

The Answer:

Four keys and four questions from Philippians chapter 1
Key #1: FOCUS

Question #1: Where is your focus?

A lesson from the life of Paul

- Paul’s circumstance

  Philippians 1:1-11

- Paul’s UPWARD focus

  3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

  Philippians 1:3-6 (NASB)

- Paul’s OUTWARD focus

  7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

  Philippians 1:7-8 (NASB)

  9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

  Philippians 1:9-11 (NASB)
1. **How to develop an upward focus**

   - A Choice = **GRATITUDE**
   - An Action = **PRAYER**
   - An Attitude = **CONFIDENCE**

   Summary = our **FEELINGS** always follow our focus!

2. **Three observations about an outward focus**

   1. Difficult circumstances reveal our true **AFFECTIONS**.

   2. Living above our circumstances occurs when our hearts are so full of people, there is no room for **SELF PITY**.

   3. Sometimes God allows adverse circumstances to realign our **AFFECTIONS**!

   Summary = our focus always follows our **AFFECTIONS**!
3. **How to develop an outward focus**

- **THINK** about those who have loved you the most.
- Pray for those you **THINK** about the most.

**Conclusion: Where’s your focus?**

- Upward or Inward?
- Outward or Inward?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the most “pressing” or difficult circumstance you are facing in your life right now?

2. How does your circumstance compare to being held in prison, and awaiting possible execution?

3. What specific steps could you take today to develop an upward and outward focus even amidst your difficult situation?
Introduction:

“Sometimes the shortest distance between two points is a ‘zig-zag’ line.”

– Dr. Don Sunnuikian

Restatement:

God’s ultimate purposes for our lives are often achieved by circumstances that seem to make no “apparent” sense to us.

Review:

- C + P = E
  (Circumstance + Perspective = Experience)

- Key #1 = FOCUS

- Question #1 = WHERE’S MY FOCUS?
Key #2: PURPOSE

Question #2: What’s my purpose?

A second lesson from the life of Paul

- Paul’s report = his thesis

  \[12\] Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

  Philippians 1:12 (NASB)

How God used Paul’s difficult circumstances

- Exhibit A = The GOSPEL goes forth

  \[13\] so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,

  Philippians 1:13 (NASB)

- Exhibit B = The CHURCH grows strong

  \[14\] and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

  Philippians 1:14 (NASB)

- Exhibit C = The MAN grows deep

  \[15\] Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; \[16\] the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; \[17\] the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

  \[18\] What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

  Philippians 1:15-18 (NASB)
3 purpose statements for every believer

1. I am an ambassador/messenger of the Gospel.
   
   • Purpose: **REACH THE “LOST”**
   
   • **Question #1** = How could God use my difficult circumstances to **advance the Gospel**?

2. I am called to encourage God’s people; to help them grow to full maturity in Christ.
   
   • Purpose: **BUILD THE “FOUND”**
   
   • **Question #2** = How could God use my difficult circumstances to **encourage other believers**?

3. I am a servant of the living God.
   
   • Purpose: **BECOME LIKE OUR MASTER**
   
   • **Question #3** = What might God want to do “in” me through my present circumstances.

**The Big Question** = Whose purpose or agenda have I been most eager to see fulfilled… God’s or mine?
Discussion Questions:

1. Review the divine formula [C + P = E] and share how your “P” was altered by your “focus” last week.

2. What was Paul’s thesis in verse 12? How did his view of his purpose transform his perspective?

3. What “good” come out of Paul’s adverse circumstances? Why could he be so joyful when his life seemed so difficult and unfair?

4. Talk through the four questions with a close friend or your small group. What would it look like to act on questions 1, 2, and 3?
Introduction: What I learned from Kevin McIntire

1. Facing our **MORTALITY** is both scary and clarifying.

2. Very few things in life **MATTER** very much.

3. **C + P = E**

4. Only an **ETERNAL** “P” can produce peace and joy when facing death.

**Question:** How do we choose joy when life is crashing in upon us?
Key #3: **HOPE**

**Question #3:** Where’s my hope?

**A third lesson from the life of Paul**

Paul’s perspective facing death = joy

18“Yes, and I will continue to rejoice…”

Philippians 1:18b (NIV)

- **Reason #1:** His deliverance is **CERTAIN**

  for I know that this will turn out for my **deliverance**
  - through your prayers and
  - the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Philippians 1:19 (NASB)

according to my **earnest expectation** and **hope,**

that I will not be put to shame in anything,

but that with all **boldness,**

Christ will (even now, as always), **be exalted in my body,** whether
  - by **life**
  - or by **death**.

Philippians 1:20 (NASB)
Reason #2: His source of joy is **UNSHAKABLE**

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

*Philippians 1:21 (NASB)*

*But if I am to live on in the flesh,*

*This will mean fruitful labor for me;*

*and I do not know which to choose.*

*Philippians 1:22 (NASB)*

*But I am hard-pressed from both directions,*

*having the desire to depart and be with Christ,*

*for that is very much better;*

*Philippians 1:23 (NASB)*

*yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

*Philippians 1:24 (NASB)*

*Convinced of this,*

*I know that I will remain and continue with you all*

*For your progress and joy in the faith,*

*so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.*

*Philippians 1:25 (NASB)*

*Philippians 1:26 (NASB)*

**Paul’s secret: “vantage point”**

*“Vantage” = a) A position or situation more advantageous than an opponent’s.*

*b) A position that allows a clear, broad view; understanding – i.e. vantage point (Cross reference – 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)*
Discussion Questions:

1. When was the last time you seriously contemplated your mortality?

2. What is the difference between “hope” as we use it in English and the biblical concept of “hope”?

3. What two reasons (Philippians 1:19-20) gave Paul such hope and confidence? What’s the difference between being “delivered out of” our circumstances and being “delivered through them”?

4. Where do you need “hope” in your life right now? In what or whom are you hoping in today?

5. What “next step” do you need to take to place your hope fully in Christ? Who could help you take that step?
**I Choose Joy**  
(Part 4)

Understanding the Power of Expectations  
Philippians 1:27-30

**Introduction:** Understanding expectations

**Review:** $C + P = E$

1. **Focus** = upward/outward, not inward!

2. **Purpose** = God, “use” my adversity!

3. **Hope** = Look through and eternal perspective!

**Key #4:** EXPECTATION

**Question #4:** What are my expectations?
A final lesson from the life of Paul

What does God expect? = consistent conduct

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Philippians 1:27a (NIV)

What does “consistent conduct” look like?

Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, [contending] as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

Philippians 1:27b-28 (NIV)

- Stand firm = Don’t give UP
- Contending = Don’t give IN
- Not frightened = Don’t shrink BACK

What can we expect from God? = 2 Gifts

29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1:29-30 (NIV)

- Granted = A privilege or “gracious gift”
- Struggle = Conflict, suffering, persecution
Understanding God’s gift of suffering

6 possible reasons we suffer

1. My SIN
   Galatians 6:7-8

2. Others’ sins
   Psalm 49:1

3. Spiritual attack
   Job
   Ephesians 6

4. Fallen world
   Luke 13

5. Spiritual DISCIPLINE
   Hebrews 12

6. Spiritual development
   2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Summary

Suffering is God’s gift to accomplish His ultimate good in a fallen world.

*God permits what He hates to accomplish that which He loves.*

-Joni Eareckson Tada
Discussion Questions:

1. Share a time in your life when your experience varied greatly from your expectations. What was the result?

2. Discuss what God expects from us. How does Paul “model” this “consistent conduct” throughout Chapter 1 of Philippians?

3. Under adverse circumstances, which of these are you most tempted to do?
   a) “give up”  b) “give in”  c) “shrink back”

4. Discuss and contrast the 2 gifts God gives us (vs. 29-30). How does this shape our expectations?

5. What new insight did you gain concerning suffering? How could this help your perspective in your current situation?