

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

Philippians 1:3-6

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

Summary = our FEELINGS always follow our focus!

2. Three observations about an outward focus

Philippians 1:7-8

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

Philippians 1:9-11

- **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

Philippians 1:13-18

- 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

¹⁸Yes, 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,***

Philippians 1:25 (NASB)

*so that your proud confidence in me may abound
in Christ Jesus*

through my coming to you again.

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?

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?