

THINK ABOUT IT

Leader Version



You know it's coming. You've been far from home, away from family and friends. You've been in a different city—maybe a different part of the country—for almost a week. They know you've been doing some cool stuff, and they're anxious to hear about it. You better be ready. After the hello's and the welcome back's and the hugs from your mom, you're going to get a very predictable question. "Well," they'll say, "how was it?"

How are you going to respond?

Give youth a chance to respond.

You could simply say, “awesome.” Or “hot.” Or “loud.” Or “hot.” Or “inspiring.” Or, “hot.” But they want to hear more. They need to hear more. So let’s think about what you’re going to tell them.

Throughout the Gathering we’ve been hearing from God through the writings of the Apostle Paul. In the last chapter of his letter to the Philippians he gives us specific direction for our thinking. As you prepare to answer that question, listen to what Paul tells us about our thinking.

Read Philippians 4:8-9.

- What does Paul tell us to think about in these verses?

Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, etc.

- Did you experience anything this week that fits this description? Share some examples.

Give youth a chance to reflect and share their experiences. Depending on how much time you have for this study, you could spend considerable time on this question alone.

- Paul didn’t have the LCMS Youth Gathering specifically in mind when he wrote these verses. What do you think he did have in mind?

He probably thought of things like joy, humility, community, and identity. He was probably thinking about the kinds of things we learned and experienced during Bible Study, Servant Events, Interest Centers, and Mass Events.

- If you had to narrow it down to one thing, what did Paul want the people of Philippi to think about above all else?

CHRIST ALONE!

Like the other prophets and apostles who wrote books of the Bible, Paul focused his teaching and preaching and writing on one thing—Jesus Christ, crucified and risen for us. Again and again he emphasizes that Christ alone is our salvation, Christ alone is our hope, Christ alone is our guide. You know this means, right? IN CHRIST ALONE is not just the theme of this Gathering. It is the summary of our lives as Christians!

So let's try this: Read Philippians 4:8 again and every time you see the word "whatever" replace it with the name of Jesus.

Have a youth, or the group as a whole do this exercise. Then read through it yourself a second time and make this change at the end of verse eight: "If there is anything worth of praise, think about Jesus." Point out that thinking about Jesus enabled Paul to endure, and even to rejoice, despite his difficult circumstances in prison.

To think about and live IN CHRIST ALONE is to live a life shaped by our baptism. It's a life of forgiveness. It's a life of hope. It's a life of service. And it's a life of community.

Watch Video.

So, you know they're going to ask...How was it?

How are you going to respond?

Give the youth another chance to answer this question. Encourage them to include the theme of the Gathering in their answer. In doing so, they will be sharing Christ alone with the people who ask them!

Paul loved the Philippians, which is why he wrote this letter to them. He wanted them—and he wants us—to live a full and joyful life IN CHRIST ALONE. Listen to his parting words in Philippians 4:1, "Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved."

That's God's Word to the Philippians. That's God's Word to all Christians. That's God's Word to you. As you stand in the community of believers in your congregation, as you recall the community of believers who just gathered together in New Orleans, and as you look forward to the eternal gathering of all the forgiven saints on that last and great day, hear this Word from God to all us: Stand together, and stand firm IN CHRIST ALONE!

Closing Prayer

Read together Philippians 4:7-11, and conclude with the Lord's Prayer.