

The crown of rejoicing for those who lead others to Christ (Philippians 4:1: 1 Thessalonians 2:19).

The crowns of scripture - using the illustration of the crown of leaves given to successful athletes. But also crowns were given to guests when they attended a banquet, a time of great joy.

So what did Paul mean when he said "Phil 4:1 my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown."

The joy of leading Lydia to Christ and then her household.
Acts.16:11-15

The joy when he led the Philippian jailer and then his family to faith in Christ. Acts 16:23-34

He said a similar thing to the Thessalonians 1 Thess 2:19-20
For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

The joy of leading others to Christ. The joy of Christian midwifery. Like teachers who pride themselves on the exam success of THEIR classes. - forgetting the work of all their previous teachers over the years.

The crown of joy is for all who share the good news of the gospel. Not just the Billy Grahams amongst us gifted specifically for evangelism.

Jesus said "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."
Luke 15:7

Today more than ever before, there is rejoicing in heaven, as the world become a smaller place - in trade (food, clothes, cars, hi fi etc) and for the gospel - travel, radio, few closed borders. We all have a part to play in the work.

But we are not all called to be pit bull Christians.

The 'crown of joy' is given for faithful witnessing. But often when we've been witnessing to friends, family, or co-workers, we get discouraged because we haven't had any success. Only God can evaluate success in evangelism, and He evaluates it on our faithfulness to Christ.

"...Neither the one who plants," wrote Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:7, "nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."

You may never know how you have helped lead people to Christ, teaching in Sunday school

- your faithfulness Sunday by Sunday that eventually aroused your neighbours curiosity as to why.

The example of Christian parenting

- The comfort and prayer you gave to someone in their time of bereavement

Your sacrificial giving to the pastorate, evangelism or missionary work.

Imagine your surprise when you get to heaven and are surrounded by all the people you have had any influence on for the sake of the gospel. Especially the ones you never met and are fluent in, say, Icelandic. What a thrill, what a joy.

Rarely are we asked at the bus stop, or in the post office queue -

What must I do to be saved. But many will talk about the weather, or the mess the politicians are making, regardless of the party in office.

So why not use the weather to talk of the regularity and beauty of the seasons, and who made the world that way.

So OK the politicians have got it wrong so who do you consider the most important person today? (event, or in all time) maybe the world's worst football referee.

Try asking what book a person is reading or last read - when they ask you at least read a bit of the Bible this morning!

Some sow, others water still others have the joy of reaping - but as a farmer you won't know the joy of reaping if you never have a sickle with you. Don't leave everything to the combine harvester driver, sharing our faith is not limited to the Billy Grahams.

Solomon put it this way: "He who wins souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

Someone has said, If you ever witness the expression in an individual's eyes when he is first convinced by the Holy Spirit of the truth of God and receives the gift of salvation, you will want to witness at every opportunity. The eyes are the windows to the soul.

As Peter says 1 Peter 3:15 "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"

A simple way can be with just Romans

3:23 All have sinned

6:23 Wages of sin

5:8 While we were sinners Christ died

10:9 Say and believe Jesus is Lord. The earliest confession of faith - involving intellect, will even emotions. . It says Jesus is God If Caesar was not Lord then you were guilty of treason, To the unbelieving Jew, Jesus is Lord is blasphemy.

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Luke 15:7

All of us are somebody's crown - maybe many people have crowns because of us - you are my crown. Because you believe, in spite of all the sin in the world - heaven is having a party

Tuesday **Revelation 3:7** "the key of David" and its possible meaning in the context of evangelism.

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