

PHILIPPIANS

~~TO LIVE IS CHRIST~~

An Eight-Week Study

Philippians

An Eight – Week Study

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY:

- Be consistent & diligent in your daily readings.
- Take the time to work through each passage, don't rush through the reading and processes of Bible study.
- Pray for the Lord to use this study to grow your understanding of Himself, of Scripture, and how this letter applies to your own walk with Jesus.
- Do your homework excellently.

HOW IT WORKS:

- There will be a schedule of daily readings for each week on the first page of the week. The authors encourage you to stick to that schedule.
- Read the passages and walk through the bible study method OIA for each passage.
- Feel free to read through the summaries and commentary points throughout the study to help you better comprehend the passage.
- Work through the reflection questions at the end of each week.
- Feel free to meet with others and work through passages together.
- Come to your Discipleship/Small Group ready to ask questions and discuss.

*"Great are the works of the Lord, **studied** by all who delight in them."*

Psalm 111:2

OIA Bible Study Method

Instructions

INTRODUCTION:

Come to Scripture with these principles and presuppositions recognized and believed:

1. The Bible is the very Word of God Himself. God is speaking when you read Scripture.
2. The Bible is the main tool that God uses to change hearts and, ultimately, lives.
3. Reading the Bible is a Spiritual Practice, you need the Spirit's help.
4. Come to Bible study prayerfully and humbly.

OBSERVATION (OR COMPREHENSION): WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

1. Start with reading the passage multiple times **without** taking any notes.
2. Observe the obvious.
 - a. Things that stick out to you.
 - b. People, places, events, etc.
3. Answer the 4 W's of the passage:
 - a. **Who:** Who is speaking? Who wrote this passage? (you can easily google search authors of the book you're reading) Who is the passage talking about? Who is the passage speaking to? Who are the major characters?
 - b. **What:** What is happening? What are the main teachings or points that are being made? What are the people doing? What is being said?
 - c. **When:** When did this event take place (time of day, history, time of the year)? When was this written?
 - d. **Where:** Where was this done? Where was this said? Where was this written? Where is the located? Are there town names, rivers, mountains, etc, mentioned?
4. Write down terms or words you don't understand.
 - a. Don't be afraid to google definitions of words you don't know.
5. Look for repeated words.
6. Look for cause and effect; if and then phrases, comparisons and contrasts, questions and answers.
7. What is the mood or tone of the author's words? (Ex: urgent, frustrated, excited, etc.)
8. Write down any questions you have about the passage you'd like to have answered.
9. Write down phrases or verses that stand out to you.
10. Are there any ideas that are emphasized, repeated, or related?
11. Any commands that the author is making?
12. Summarize the passage in your own words.

These are all suggestions to help you make helpful observations. They are not in order, and not an exhaustive list.

The purpose of Observation is **comprehension**. The objective is to force you to read for detail. When we read for comprehension, we ask ourselves, "what does it say?" This is hard work. A person who comprehends the account of the 6 days of creation can tell you specifically what happened on each day. This is the first step toward being able to interpret and apply the passage: being able to communicate what it says in detail. You don't have to understand what it means to be able to communicate what the text says. Do the hard work of observation and you set yourself up for better interpretation!

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

1. Start with reading through the text again.
2. Now begin answering the questions you wrote down during your time of observation. This is why doing observation well is essential to good interpretation.
3. Work through the "C's" of Interpretation:
 - a. **Context:**
 - i. *Near Context:* Read the verses immediately before and after the passage.
 - ii. *Far Context:* Read the paragraph and/or the chapter that precedes or follows, along with how it fits into the context of the rest of Scripture.
 - iii. Context helps you understand more of the overall thought/argument or situation the text finds itself in.
 - b. **Cross – References:**
 - i. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
 - ii. The Bible will often shed light on the passage you're looking at. Look up different cross-references of the passage you're reading.
 - iii. Cross-References are notes placed in your Bible that direct you to other passages of Scripture that talk about a similar or even the same topic.
 1. These are often found in the margins or on the bottom of a page.
 - c. **Conclusion:**
 - i. This is where you gather all the information, and you seek to answer this question:
 1. *What is the main point of this passage?*
 - d. **Consultation:**
 - i. Now you can check your work by using Study Bibles or Commentaries.
 - ii. Only after you've done the hard work of answering your questions and working through the other C's.

- iii. A **Bible commentary** is a written, systematic series of explanations and interpretations of **Scripture**.
- iv. Here are some free Bible resources you can use for commentaries:
 - 1. www.blueletterbible.org
 - 2. www.planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes
 - a. Theologian and Professor from Dallas Theological Seminary has a complete commentary on the Bible that's FREE to use and a great commentary series!

While Observation (or Comprehension) asks, "what does it say?", Interpretation asks, "what does it mean?" With Interpretation, you must be okay with the unknown and trying to work through it. Don't simply read the passage and run immediately to a commentary or Study Bible, but actually learn how to study the Bible on your own and to think critically about Scripture. In Interpretation, we're trying to find the **author's intended meaning**. Not what we believe it to mean, but what the author meant when he was writing to his original audience. God has truth to communicate to us from His Word and He does that as we faithfully seek to understand a text. A good interpreter will be able to sit in the unknown and fight to find answers before running to get answers from another source.

APPLICATION: WHAT DOES THIS TEXT MEAN FOR MY LIFE?

1. **Begin by asking these 3 questions:**
 - a. How does the truth revealed here affect my relationship with God?
 - b. How does the truth affect my relationship with other people?
 - c. How does this truth affect me?
2. **SPECK Application Method:**
 - a. *S: Sin to Confess*
 - i. Is there any sin revealed in this passage that I am guilty of in my own life?
 - b. *P: Promise to Claim*
 - i. Is there a promise from God that I can seek to remember and cling to for my life/walk?
 - c. *E: Example to Follow*
 - i. Do I find people in this passage that give a good example to imitate? OR are there bad examples to avoid?
 - d. *C: Command to Obey*
 - i. Are there any specific commands given for me to follow today?
 - e. *K: Knowledge about God*
 - i. What does this passage teach me about God or about Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?
3. Not all letters of SPECK will be applicable to every passage. But there should always be at least 1.

After doing the hard work of observation and interpretation, you're ready to now ask the question, "how should this change me?" You can truly apply a text to your life when you understand it correctly, but not until then. Wrong interpretation can lead to wrong applications of Scripture. But also, simply reading a text to understand it alone isn't enough, we must do the work of applying the text to our lives to experience the transformation that comes as we behold God in His Word (2 Corinthians 3:18). **The key to application is putting into practice what God has taught you in your study.**

SOME GUIDELINES:

It is vital for the learning process, for understanding Scripture well that you move through each of these three stages of understanding on your own, without the aid of outside sources. As you do the work and practice these steps on your own, you will begin to become a competent reader, interpreter, and applier of Scripture.

Nobody likes to feel like they don't understand or that they're lost, but this step is important to the gathering and retention of knowledge and understanding. So, fight the urge to run immediately to a commentary or Study Bible when this feeling of uncertainty creeps in. Fight to try and understand a text on your own and to think critically yourself instead of having someone else do it for you.

"The Bible isn't a book of self-discovery; it is a book about God-discovery." God makes Himself known to us as we read His Word and longs to use it to mold and shape us more into His image. So, come to your daily readings expecting for God to reveal Himself to you.

Most of us are good at loving God with our hearts, but not with our minds. We are good at employing our emotions to pursue God, but God commands us to love Him with our whole heart, soul, strength, and with our MINDS (Matt. 22:37). Bring your emotions to your study of God's Word, but we are asking you would also bring your mind and seek to be a good student of the Word, allowing God to renew your mind, thus transforming your heart.

"Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth."

John 17:17

Philippians

Overview

Background Information:

- **Author:** Paul the Apostle is identified as the author. Paul was a former Pharisee that persecuted Christians, but Jesus miraculously revealed Himself to Paul on his way to Damascus to capture Christians. Paul would immediately believe in Jesus and later on become an apostle and missionary, planting dozens of Churches, including the one in Philippi, the Church to whom the letter is addressed.
- **Date:** Around AD 59 – AD 62. We know this because we know when Paul was imprisoned in Rome.
- **Provenance:** Written during Paul's Roman imprisonment. Paul would write many of his letters to various churches during this extended imprisonment.
- **Recipients:** The Church in Philippi (Macedonia – Modern Day Greece). Philippi was a diverse city that was home to various types of people and cultures. The majority of the Church would've been Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians due to the city having a very low Jewish population and what we know of the first converts of the Church (Acts 16). Philippi was a large and influential city in Ancient Rome, and Paul visited quite often. The city would've had a vast number of cults and worship of various Roman "gods" and even Roman emperor cult worship. This is the city that the Church in Philippi is located.
- **Purpose:** To promote Gospel-centered unity for the sake of advancing the Gospel.
- **Key Themes:** Partnership in the Gospel and walking worthy of the Gospel.
- **Key Verses:** Philippians 1:27 – 30

Theological Themes emphasized:

- The Gospel and its implications on our lives.
- The glory of God (1:11; 1:20; 1:21; 1:26; 2:9 – 11; 3:7 – 8; etc.)
- The Person and Work of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:6 – 11)
- Christian Unity (1:27 – 30; 2:1-4; etc.)
- Joy in Christ (Phil. 1:4; 1:18; 1:25; 3:1; 4:1; 4:4; 4:10; etc.)
- Christian Suffering (Phil. 1:12 – 13; Phil. 1:29; etc.)
- Justification (made right with God) by Faith Alone (Phil. 3:9)

Purposes: Paul writes to:

- To spur them on to progress in their Christian growth (Phil. 2:12; 3:12–17)
- To warn of those who proclaim another gospel (Phil. 3:2, 18–19)
- To reiterate the true gospel and encourage them to hold tightly to it (Phil. 3:3–11)
- To encourage their unity and confront any lack of unity (Phil. 2:1–4; 4:2–3)
- To call them to joy and thankfulness and peace (Phil. 2:18; 3:1; 4:4–7)
- To plead with them to keep their eyes on Christ and the hope of heaven (Phil. 3:2–21)

Philippians

Week 1

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 1:1 – 2

Day 2: Philippians 1:3 – 11

Day 3: Acts 15:36 – 16:40

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Paul celebrates God's genuine work of grace in the Philippians, warmly thanking them for their partnership in the gospel, and praying for their future growth in the faith.

Also, take the time to read through Paul's time in Philippi, as he sought to establish the Church there. This helps us see the letter to the Philippian Church as written to a real place, to a real people, in a real context.

Day 1: *Philippians 1:1-2*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 1:3-11*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

PERSERVERANCE OF THE SAINTS: According to this doctrine, God enables all true believers to remain faithful to the end. Those who willfully continue in sin reveal that they were never truly believers. This doctrine does not deny the reality that even true believers still sin, nor does it mean that those who have made a profession of faith are free to live willfully sinful, godless lives.

Day 3: Acts 15:36 – Acts 16:40

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Philippians

Week 2

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 1:12 – 18

Day 2: Philippians 1:19 – 26

Day 3: Philippians 1:27 – 30

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Paul encourages the church with the news that the gospel is spreading, not despite his imprisonment but through it—and this is all that matters. Paul then seeks to calm the Philippians' concerns for his wellbeing, not with a simple assurance that his circumstances will turn out fine, but by demonstrating his own trust in God and by calling them to the same level of trust.

Day 1: *Philippians 1:12 – 18*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 1:19 – 26* | *Job 13:13 – 18*

Observation:

Sovereignty: Supreme and independent power and authority. Sovereignty over all things is a distinctive attribute of God (1 Tim. 6:15–16). He directs all things to carry out his purposes (Rom. 8:28–29).

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *Philippians 1: 27 – 30*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper:

WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL. Paul exhorts the Philippians, “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27). Paul is not suggesting that the gospel can be earned with a worthy life. No one, in this life or the next, will be “worthy of the gospel” in that sense. **The gospel is good news about someone else’s worth and work.** What then does Paul mean by his call to a “manner of life” that is “worthy of the gospel”? As noted above, this phrase “manner of life” can be translated “life as citizens.” It is a word picture that is grasped in any culture that has citizenship, but it would have been especially forceful to people in a city such as Philippi, most of whom were Roman citizens. To be a Roman citizen didn’t just mean that you were born in a Roman province. It was to be Roman—with Roman thinking, Roman ways, Roman culture, and Roman allegiances (especially to Caesar). Paul is shaking all that up by directing their focus to a higher citizenship, higher identity, higher standard of conduct, and higher allegiance. They are now to live in a way that befits—that is “worthy of”—the gospel and this heavenly citizenship.

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: Paul was a man with one foot planted on earth and another planted in heaven. He lived at the same time in this world and in the world to come. This is apparent as he wrestles with conflicting desires—wanting to depart from this world to be with Jesus, and yet feeling the need to remain in this world for the sake of the church. We too should see that needs are many and there is much work to be done for Jesus and his church. But, like Paul, we too should have a constant eye on, even a sincere longing for, what’s to come, whether at the time of our death or at Jesus’ return.

Day 4: Reflection

- Paul encourages the concerned Philippians by insisting that his imprisonment has actually helped the spread of the gospel, and he gives **three examples** to prove his point (Phil. 1:12–18). Identify each of the encouraging examples, describing them in your own words.

- Philippians 1:27 – 30 serves as the key verses to the letter to the Philippians and alludes to multiple themes of the letter (Walking worthy of the Gospel; Unity; Christian suffering). Phil. 1:27 can more literally mean to “*behave as citizens worthy of citizenship*”. Paul will again allude to this in Phil. 3:20 when he says that “*we’re citizens of Heaven*”. What does it mean to be a citizen? What kind of benefits does a person receive when they’re a citizen somewhere? How can that help us make sense of the significance of our citizenship in Heaven?

Exhortation: A message encouraging someone to follow a particular course of action or to submit to a different way of thinking.

PRAYER POINT FOR WEEK 1:

- Pray asking God to continue to grow you as a citizen of Heaven. That your life would begin to bear fruit of someone who’s true allegiance lies in Jesus over all, and that you’d live a life “worthy of the Gospel”. (Read our note on what “worthy of the Gospel” means).

ACTION STEP:

- Begin to order your life around Jesus and His ways as you seek to live a life befitting one who’s citizenship is in Heaven.

Philippians

Week 3

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 2:1 – 4

Day 2: Philippians 2: 5 – 11 | Colossians 1:15 – 20

Day 3: John 13:1 – 20 or Matthew 20:20 – 28

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

On the basis of the rich realities of the gospel, Paul commands the church to be unified by being humble and caring, looking to Christ as the perfect example of humble servanthood in his incarnation (becoming a man), crucifixion (humiliating death), and exaltation (authority and glory in Heaven).

Day 1: *Philippians 2:1 – 4*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 2:5 – 11 / Colossians 1: 15 – 20 (Jesus' true identity and nature revealed)*

Observation:

Incarnation: Literally “(becoming) in flesh,” it refers to God becoming a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Christ: Transliteration of the Greek for “anointed one” (equivalent to Hebrew Messiah). The term is used throughout the NT as a title for Jesus, indicating his role as Messiah and Savior.

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *John 13:1 – 20 or Matthew 20:20 – 28*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

ONE PERSON, TWO NATURES: When Paul writes that Christ “emptied himself” (Phil. 2:7), he doesn’t mean that Christ emptied Himself of divinity, or even of some divine attributes. He is stressing that all divine privileges, though rightfully his, were humbly set aside in becoming a man and suffering in our place. Likewise, the language of “taking the form of a servant . . . being born in the likeness of men . . . in human form” (Phil. 2:7–8) doesn’t suggest that Christ was only human-like or only appeared human. The incarnate Christ was one divine-human person with two natures. The early church rightly discerned that these two natures are united without mixture, confusion, separation, or division. As one person, Jesus did not alternate between his human and divine natures. Instead, he operated out of the totality of his divine-human person. While these are profound theological matters, in principle they are simply drawn from and necessitated by the divine-human language of Philippians 2:6–8.

JESUS, THE EXALTED LORD: Philippians 2:9–11 explains one major outcome of Christ’s righteous suffering and death: The Father exalted Jesus. In the resurrection—and later in the ascension—Christ’s deity, obedience, and sacrificial death were vindicated by God. The themes of vindication and exaltation are likewise part of those servant passages in Isaiah. God will “prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied” (Isa. 53:10–11). God’s servant “shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted” (Isa. 52:13). Paul also insists that this exaltation resulted in Christ bearing “the name that is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). He is “Lord”—a term that reflects not only authority but also God’s personal name, Yahweh (Isa. 42:8). Before this name, “every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess” (Phil. 2:10–11). Paul takes these phrases from Isaiah 45:23, thereby equating the servant Christ with Yahweh himself.

JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT: Paul’s teaching on Christ’s humble, servant-like sacrifice has its roots in the Old Testament theme of “the servant of the Lord” (Isaiah 42: 49; 53). While not quoting directly from key passages like [Isaiah 53](#), Paul clearly alludes to Isaiah’s “suffering servant.” Though he was eternally and fully God—with all divine rights, privileges, and attributes—the second person of the Trinity took on flesh and was born (Phil. 2:6). In doing so, he “emptied himself” and took on the “form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7). The extent of his servanthood was complete—unto death. Further, Paul specifies that his death was “on a cross” (Phil. 2:8)—a form of death that uniquely fits the graphically violent language of [Isaiah 53](#). Paul, then, isn’t just reminding the Philippians what happened or what Jesus did, but is reminding them also who he is: the Promised One, the Messiah, the fulfillment.

Philippians

Week 4

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 2:12 – 18

Day 2: Matthew 5:13 – 16

Day 3: 1 John 1:5 – 10

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Having exhorted the Philippians to pursue further unity (Phil. 1:27–2:4) by looking to Christ as the supreme model of selfless humility (Phil. 2:5–11), Paul now provides a series of exhortations related to perseverance, especially in light of the watching world (Phil. 2:12–18).

Paul encourages the Philippians to *work out* the salvation that God is *working in* them, demonstrating the genuineness of their faith to both Paul and the world.

Day 1: *Philippians 2:12 – 18*

Observation:

Sanctification: The process of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. This process begins immediately after regeneration and continues throughout a Christian's life.

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: Matthew 5:13 – 16

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: 1 John 1:5 – 10

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

WORKING BECAUSE OF GOD'S WORK: The sovereignty of God's sanctifying work in the Christian is far from a disincentive to our own personal work. God's work is the very basis and primary motivation for ours. It is certainly a mystery precisely how the human responsibility of [Philippians 2:12](#) and the divine sovereignty of [Philippians 2:13](#) work together, but both are indeed true; both truths are clearly stated. But the word connecting them, "for" ([Phil. 2:13](#)), is telling, since it speaks to the motivation of our work, or the implication of God's work. God's ongoing, gracious work must not lead to laziness, indifference, or passivity, but to an awe-filled longing and striving to see salvation worked out more broadly and deeply.

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD. When Paul writes that the Philippians "shine as lights in the world" ([Phil. 2:15](#)), he is tapping into rich Biblical language. God promised in [Isaiah 42:6-7](#) that he would one day "give a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind." The New Testament writers clearly saw this promise fulfilled in the coming of Jesus ([Matt. 4:16](#); [Luke 2:32](#)). In fact, Jesus himself insisted that he is "the light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)); he came into the world "as light, so that whoever believes" in him will "not remain in darkness" ([John 12:46](#)). But Jesus also told his disciples that, by extension, they are "the light of the world." Elsewhere in [Isaiah](#), God said he will raise up a people who will be "a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" ([Isaiah 49:6](#)). So too the Philippians are to "shine as lights in the world."

Philippians

Week 5

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 2:19 – 24

Day 2: Matthew 25:31 – 46

Day 3 Philippians 2:25 – 30

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Paul's update on Timothy and Epaphroditus in the middle (Phil. 2:19–30) is the longest of these sections. Paul having called the Philippian church to unity with Christlike selflessness, servanthood, and sacrifice (Phil. 1:27–2:11), and having commanded them to work out their salvation (Phil. 2:12–18), Paul now gives necessary updates on **two model servants** who exemplify the very ideals he has encouraged in Philippians 1:27–2:18.

Day 1: *Philippians 2:19 – 24*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: Matthew 25:31 – 46 (Notice the characteristics of those whom Jesus commends compared to those He judges)

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *Philippians 2:25 – 30*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

SEEING CHRIST IN OTHERS: While this section of the letter has its own purposes of updating the Philippians on practical matters, Timothy and Epaphroditus also serve as real-life examples of the Christlike attitude and actions that Paul calls the Philippians to in Philippians 2:1–8. Timothy exemplifies concern and selflessness (Phil. 2:20–21). Both Timothy and Epaphroditus have “served” Paul in his need (Phil. 2:22, 25). Epaphroditus is concerned for the Philippians; even selflessly concerned for their concern for him (Phil. 2:26). A supreme mark of Christlikeness, he was willing to lay down his life for the Philippians, for Paul, and for the gospel mission (Phil. 2:30). Paul never explicitly says that the Philippians should follow the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus—he doesn’t need to; it is clearly implied. While Christ is the perfect example (and the only saving sacrifice), God is good to give us imperfect but important examples of Christlikeness to watch and imitate. Paul will make this point more explicitly later in this letter (Phil. 3:17; 4:9).

THE MISSION: With all of the updates and personal commendations of Philippians 2:19–30, it might be easy to forget the most basic point behind all these comings and goings: the mission. That’s why Paul is imprisoned and awaiting trial. That’s why the Philippians sent support to Paul through Epaphroditus. It was the “work of Christ” for which he was “risking his life” (Phil. 2:30). For the sake of the mission, too, Timothy must stay with Paul for the time being (likely for Paul’s defense); but he will return to Philippi as soon as possible to check up on the church (Phil. 2:19). His concern for their welfare is part of seeking the “interests . . . of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 2:21). Sacrifice. Concern. Going. Serving. Risking. All for the sake of Christ and his mission. We shouldn’t read Philippians 2:2:19–30 without remembering the gospel-priority in which Paul exulted in Philippians 2:1:12–18. And we shouldn’t read Philippians 2:19–30 without remembering themes like the hope of global praise in Psalm 117, or the great commission in Matthew 28:18–20.

Day 4: Reflection

- In Paul's commendation of Timothy, he states that Timothy genuinely cared for the Philippians "welfare", not like others who "seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:20 – 21). As you read Matt. 25:31 – 46, what are the "interests of Jesus"? What are the characteristics or attitudes that Jesus commends in this passage? (**Hint:** verses 35 – 39)

- Timothy and Epaphroditus are examples of the lives of those who "live a life worthy of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27) and have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-8). Paul is saying that he could see Christ in these men, and our lives should also reflect Jesus. What are some characteristics of these men that we can seek to emulate as we follow Jesus?

PRAYER POINT:

- Pray for a heart that is selfless and caring more for the needs of others than of yourself, knowing that as you live this way, you honor Jesus and mirror Him to the world around you, much like Timothy and Epaphroditus.

ACTION STEP:

- Choose one of the characteristics you mentioned in reflection above and think through some tangible ways that you can grow in that one specific characteristic this week.

Philippians

Week 6

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 3:1 – 3

Day 2: Philippians 3:4 – 11

Day 3 Psalm 73:25 – 28

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Some have suggested that Philippians 3:1 and following seems like a strangely abrupt transition. But there are repeated themes and words in these verses that prove to be an orderly flow of thought from Philippians 2–3. Having called the Philippians to hold fast to the “word of life” and to “rejoice” in mutual sacrifice for the gospel (Phil. 2:16–18) and having shown Timothy and Epaphroditus to be Christlike models (Phil. 2:19–30), Paul now further expounds upon that “word of life,” contrasting false teaching with his own conversion and present confession (Phil. 3:1–11).

The Philippians are to follow Paul in rejoicing in the Lord by resisting false teachers who trust in the flesh and glorying instead in Christ alone as their complete righteousness.

Day 1: *Philippians 3:1 – 3*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 3:4 – 11*

Observation:

Faith: Trust in or reliance upon something or someone despite a lack of concrete proof. Salvation, which is purely a work of God's grace, can be received only through faith (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:8–9).

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *Psalm 73:25 – 28*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

THE LAW VERSUS FAITH: Paul's words—as well as his life—make clear two different, opposing religious models. One model rests its confidence in the law and the flesh and the other rests in Christ's righteousness as a gift through faith. This raises the question of how Paul can seem to speak disparagingly about the law, since it was given by God who commanded his people to obey it. Indeed, Paul elsewhere attests that "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). But how one uses the law makes all the difference in the world. God intended the Mosaic law primarily as a preparation for the righteousness that would come through the Messiah (see Gal. 3:23–25). But, like many Jews in his day, Paul had grown up trusting "a righteousness of [his] own that comes from the law" (Phil. 3:9). Obedience to the law was the primary basis for a right standing with God. He later came to see that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:3). But many in his day—even some professing Christians—hadn't rightly understood this. Some mingled Christ and this distorted view of the law. They imposed the legal demands of the law on others, especially Gentiles, who, in their reckoning, needed to be circumcised and to keep the law. But such barking "dogs" (Phil. 3:2) should be ignored, Paul insists. Those who have the true circumcision "worship by the Spirit, . . . and glory in Christ . . . and put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

NO RIGHTEOUSNESS/ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS. If anyone had reason to be confident in himself—in religious heritage, zeal, discipline, moral scruples, etc.—it was Paul. He wasn't perfect, but compared with others, he was "blameless" (Phil. 3:6). Humanly speaking, he had attained all of the "righteousness" one could. But by God's intervening grace, Paul was shown that the only hope for being made right with God is to abandon any and all confidence in his own goodness and good works. His "achievements" achieved nothing. Actually, even worse, they were "loss," even "rubbish" (Phil. 3:7–8). All self-trust must be renounced (such is repentance). Only then is one ready to see Jesus' life and death not as a "loss" but as a "gain." True righteousness "comes through faith in Christ;" it "depends on faith" (Phil. 3:9). Faith itself doesn't save, for even the demons believe (James 2:19), nor does trust in faith itself (you trust in Christ, not your ability to believe). Faith is looking outside of self to trust in "Christ, the righteousness of God" (1 Cor. 1:30–31) for us.

KNOWING CHRIST. Philippians 3:1–11 is intensely personal, not only because Paul opens up his own life, but also because of the way that he speaks of Christ. Salvation is desirable, of course, because sinners need forgiveness, and the alternative is eternal condemnation; but it is ultimately desirable "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8). Christ is not merely the means to gain mercy, but mercy is the means by which we "gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8). Salvation is a Person.

Day 4: Reflection

- When Paul writes of what he used to consider “gain” (Phil. 3:7), what does he have in mind with using the word “gain”? Is it a spiritual gain or comforts of that former way of life? What do you think he means? What are some things that you seek to “gain”?

- In Philippians 3:9, Paul compares the “*so called*” righteousness with “*true*” righteousness. The gospel is infinitely glorious, rich, and expansive, but here Paul condenses the gospel message to a few short lines, making clear what it is and is not. Do the same in your own words. Imagine a friend asked you what he or she must do in order to be made right with God; what would you say?

- How does God’s acceptance of you change the way you view Him and your relationship with Him? Do you view knowing Christ as infinitely better than anything else because of the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:8)?

PRAYER POINT:

- Pray for God to help you treasure Jesus above all else and for a renewed heart and mind that seeks to truly know Christ.

ACTION STEP:

- Spend some time this week meditating on Philippians 3:7-11, (particularly verse 9) where Paul defines true righteousness compared to so called righteousness.

Philippians

Week 7

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 3:12 – 16

Day 2: Philippians 3:17 – 21

Day 3 Colossians 3:1 – 4

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

Paul warned the Philippians about false teachers in Philippians 3:2. Their distortion of the gospel led him to use his own life as illustrative of a wrong (Phil. 3:4–6) and a right (Phil. 3:7–9) understanding of the gospel. The true gospel looks to Christ alone for righteousness, but then pursues further intimacy and identification with him (Phil. 3:10–11). Now clarifying that the Christian life is imperfect and in process, Paul appeals to the Philippians to follow his example and not that of false teachers (Phil. 3:18–19).

The Christian life is neither one of perfection nor of passivity, but a progressive pursuit of Christ and his likeness as we await his return and the consummation (fulfillment) of all things.

Day 1: *Philippians 3:12 – 16*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 3:17 – 21*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *Colossians 3:1 – 4*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

INDWELLING SIN: When Paul acknowledges his spiritual imperfection in Philippians 3:12–14, he is assuming a theological category that is fundamental to the Christian life. The absence of perfection assumes the presence of sin. While sin’s dominion has been crushed by God’s regenerating grace (Rom. 6:1–14), and his law has been written on the heart, creating new desires (Jer. 31:33), there is a principle of remaining indwelling sin—what Paul often calls “the flesh” (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16–23; Col. 2:23). Sin has been dealt a deathblow in regeneration, but it dies a slow death. In many ways, it is still quite active. The passions of the flesh “wage war against your soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). This is a slow and lifelong war. Thus, hard work is assumed in Paul’s language of “pressing on” and “straining forward.” But progress is also assumed. The race is run in steps—often small (and at times backward!), but we pray and strive for “progress” (Phil. 1:25). Such growth isn’t gained through performance of the law (Phil. 3:2) but in knowing and seeking Christ (Phil. 3:1–14; see also 2 Cor. 3:18).

HEAVEN: Philippians 3:20 says that “our citizenship is in heaven.” What is heaven? At the consummation of all things there will be a completely reconstructed creation, a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21–22). However, heaven is not just a future reality and place. Nor is it simply the dwelling of those who die before Christ’s return. Heaven is also a present, invisible reality for the saints living on earth. Every Christian is already “blessed . . . with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3). Raised up with Christ in regeneration, we are mysteriously but really “seated . . . with him in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6). So when Paul writes “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20), he is not only encouraging us to think about where we will go, but also about where we are now. It is a concept as majestic as it is mysterious. We “see” this realm now only with the eyes of faith (2 Cor. 4:18). We must “set our minds” on it (Col. 3:2) and long for the day when “heaven” will not only become visible but will overtake and transform everything.

Philippians

Week 8

Passages for the Week:

Day 1: Philippians 4:1 – 9

Day 2: Philippians 4:10 – 20

Day 3 Philippians 4:21 – 23

Day 4: Reflection / Catch Up

The Philippians are to stand firm by pursuing peace, joy, gentleness, trust, prayer, and right thinking—matters that Paul has taught and modeled for them. Paul then closes by warmly thanking the Philippians for once again supporting his mission, but he also takes the opportunity to explain that he has learned to be content, with little or much.

Day 1: *Philippians 4:1 – 9 / Romans 12:9 – 21*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 2: *Philippians 4:10 – 20*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Day 3: *Philippians 4:20 – 23*

Observation:

Interpretation:

Application:

Digging Deeper

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION: Because every believer is “in Christ,” believers are in Christ together. Communion with Christ includes communion with others in the body of Christ (the church). Of course, this doesn’t mean that there aren’t disagreements or conflicts between Christians—even mature and experienced Christians; Euodia and Syntyche had “labored side by side” with Paul (Phil. 4:3), and yet their disagreement rose to such a level that news of it reached Rome. It troubled Paul enough that he addressed them by name in a public letter to the whole church. He pleads with them to “agree in the Lord” (Phil. 4:2). In essence he is saying, Ladies, recognize what you share, recognize your identity, recognize the saving benefits in Christ (Phil. 2:1–2), and recognize them in each other. Paul isn’t naïve and he isn’t suggesting that agreement can be reached by sweeping conflict under the rug. Concerns will have to be discussed, confession eventually made, and forgiveness granted. But the relationships themselves are often complicated. Thus, Paul calls on a “true companion”—unknown to us but obviously known to Paul and the Philippians—to “help these women” get along (Phil. 4:3). This is simply the church exchanging self-interests for the “interests of others” (Phil. 2:4), and working out salvation with one another (Phil. 2:12). It is a corporate enterprise.

PEACE: The concept of peace is fundamental to Philippians 4. Not only is the word used twice (“peace of God,” Phil. 4:7; “God of peace,” Phil. 4:9), but Paul also alludes to peace with other words. Euodia and Syntyche need to pursue peace (Phil. 4:2). A gentle spirit (“reasonableness;” Phil. 4:5) is one that is inwardly and outwardly at peace. Anxiety is the absence of inner peace. Prayer is the antidote to anxiety and the path to God’s supernatural peace (Phil. 4:6–7). Peace is also a theme significant to the whole Bible. In many ways, God’s plan can be charted through this lens: peace created in the garden, lost in the fall, and restored progressively by God. God’s plan to restore peace is first seen in the promises and shadows of the Old Testament, but ultimately through the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), Jesus, in the New Testament. In his coming, dying, and rising, and His Spirit’s drawing, the peace of Christ penetrates lives, permeates relationships, and comforts hearts. The Prince of Peace will come again to bring final judgment on the world and final salvation to His own, thereby bringing all His promises for peace to their fulfillment.

Day 4: Reflection

- Philippians 4:6 issues one negative command (what not to do) and one positive command (what to do). What are they, and how do they relate to each other?

- In Philippians 4:8, Paul provides eight parameters for our thinking. How might these serve as (1) a filter for what not to think, and (2) a prescription for what to proactively think (meditate) upon? In what practical ways might you proactively “think about” things that are listed in Phil. 4:8?

- What is one thing that Philippians has taught you about: 1). God, 2). Jesus, 3) how to relate with others, 4) your own relationship with Jesus?

PRAYER POINT:

- Pray to God thanking Him for all He’s done using this study and that what you’ve learned in this study would be nailed down in your heart for years to come.

ACTION STEP:

- What is one thing that you’re anxious about that you could pray for this week? Believing that as you bring that anxiety to Christ, He will grant you peace?

SOURCES CONSULTED IN THE ACCUMULATION OF THIS STUDY:

Richard Melick, *The New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1991).

Ryan Kelly, *Philippians: A 12 Week Study* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

Andreas Köstenberger, *The Cradle, The Cross, & The Crown: 2nd Edition* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2016).

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.”

Philippians 1:27-28