

# PHILIPPIANS

THE WAY OF JESUS, TOGETHER

FAMILY STUDY GUIDE

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## Introduction

As we study the Book of Philippians together, we hope you enjoy this seven-week study guide. It's designed to be used in a group setting for the purpose of deeper study and transformational growth. Complimentary to the Sunday morning teaching, this study will help your group dive into the text by asking questions and prompting discussion. We will explore who Jesus is, what he has done and what it means to be one of his followers. We will learn what it means to be with Jesus, to be like Jesus and to follow his example by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### The Author of the Letter to the Philippians

The author identifies himself as the Apostle Paul; the literary style and historical evidence agree with Pauline authorship for the book of Philippians. Paul's background is mentioned in Acts 9, Philippians 3, and Galatians 3.

### The Date of the Letter to the Philippians

Scholars estimate that the Apostle Paul's letter to the churches in Philippi was likely written during his imprisonment in Rome in the year 62 A.D.

### Major Themes within the Letter to the Philippians

The Apostle Paul pens the famous letter to the Philippians to encourage the churches in Philippi to remember that they're part of the Kingdom, citizens of Heaven, and sons of God. Paul desires for the churches to see God's hand at work, even in his imprisonment. The Apostle reminds believers to follow the ultimate example of Jesus by walking in humility. Jesus is the supreme example of this way of life. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus try to be good examples as well.

## Purpose of the Letter to the Philippians

Paul wrote the letter intended for the churches in Philippi while he was imprisoned in a Roman jail. The letter shows that the Apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had several purposes in writing the letter:

### 4-Fold Purpose:

- To tell the churches in Philippi that their pastor, Epaphroditus, had recovered from a serious, possibly life-threatening illness.
- To encourage the Philippians in their newly-formed faith in Jesus.
- To assure them that God was behind his current imprisonment, using it for his own purposes.
- To encourage the churches, inspire them to greater faithfulness, and thank them for their continued support.

Paul wanted the Philippians to see that what might seem like a personal loss was actually a Kingdom win; the church was being reinforced by new leaders, the Gospel was being proclaimed in Rome and the mission was advancing.

## Outline of Philippians

- I. Formal Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Thankfulness for the Philippians (1:3-11)
- III. Paul's Situation (1:12-26)
- IV. Exhortations to the Philippians (1:27;2:18)
  - Living a Life Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)
  - Following Jesus' Example of Humility (2:1-18)
- V. Paul's Students (2:19-30)
  - Timothy's Example of Faith (2:19-24)
  - Epaphroditus Example of Faith (2:25-30)
- VI. Warnings Against Legalism (3:1-21)
  - Paul's Testimony of Salvation (3:1-16)
  - Paul's Example of Faith (3:17-4:1)
- VII. Conclusion (4:2-23)  
Instructions Concerning Different Aspects of the Christian Life (4:2-9)
  - Testimony, Repeated Thanks (4:10-20) and Final Thoughts (4:21-23)

## Map of Philippi



(Map from Crossway ESV Study Bible at [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org).)

**Advance the Gospel - Read Philippians 1:12-18**

**Bottom Line**

Paul was thrown into jail for telling other people about Jesus. However, Paul acted differently than we would expect. From our perspective, he should have been sad and angry, but he reacted with joy and encouragement. Let's dig into this section of the Bible to see why Paul reacted the way he did.

**Goal of Family Devotional**

As a family, begin talking about how living like Jesus means shifting our perspective to recognize situations in life and interactions with people around us as opportunities to spread the good news of Jesus.

**Just for Fun**

1. Have you ever had a food that you disliked the first time you tasted it but now love it?
2. Have you ever been taught something new about something that you've owned for a while?

**Discussion Questions**

3. What is perspective?
4. What has happened to Paul in v12? How did Christians around Paul respond?
5. Paul has been thrown in jail, how did he respond? Why did Paul respond this way?
6. How can changing what you focus on change your perspective and attitude?
7. When we're struggling with anxiety, fear, or frustration, what should we focus on to see our situations from God's perspective?

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 1:12 <sup>NLT</sup>

*And I want you to know, my dear brother and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the good news.*

**To Live is Christ and to Die is Gain - Read Philippians 1:19-30**

**Bottom Line**

We respond to the truth that Jesus died for us and rose, conquering death forever. We make our lives about Jesus, even if people threaten to kill us for it. Even if someone kills us for being a Christian, we get to be with Jesus.

Joining a soccer team or dance team requires that we learn the playbook or choreography. Being joined to Jesus requires that we learn how to live like him. He'll never cut us from the team if we mess up. This gives us the freedom, as a family, to live for Jesus no matter what comes our way.

**Goal of Family Devotional**

As a family, craft a vision of how you can live for Christ together in your home, school, neighborhood, sports teams, dance teams, and other places God has you.

**Just For Fun**

1. Have you ever been on a team, like a basketball or dance team, and messed up? How did your teammates respond? How did your coach/teacher respond?
2. What's the most fun you've had on a team or as a part of a group? Why?

**Discussion Questions**

3. What are the two outcomes that Paul saw for himself?
4. In v20, v22, and v24, what does Paul decide he's going to do since it's out of his control whether he lives or dies?
5. Look at v27. What does it mean for a family of Christians to have one spirit and faith? Why do you think that's an important thing for a family trying to live for Jesus?
6. What is our family's main purpose? What ways can we honor Jesus with our lives?
7. How can we as a family strive together to share Jesus with friends and family?

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 1:21 <sup>NLT</sup>

*For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.*

**Humility Like Jesus - Read Philippians 2:1-11**

**Bottom Line**

Pride is one of the most destructive forces we have to deal with. Paul points out that Jesus, though he is God, did not consider equality with God something that could be grasped. Jesus humbled himself and through it was glorified. Our response should be the same, so that our Father may be glorified.

**Goal of Family Devotional**

To see and understand Christian humility clearly, we must look to Christ.

**Just for Fun**

1. Have you ever been part of a team where one person hogged the ball? Describe the situation. How did the team or group react? What was the outcome? How did it make you feel?

**Discussion Questions**

2. How do you know when you're being humble?
3. How would you describe the attitude that Paul encourages Christians to have in v5? (See v3-4 for hints.)
4. Which area(s) of your life are you prideful in? What are some of the effects of pride in your life?
5. How can you demonstrate humility in the areas that pride usually shows up?
6. What's one action step you're going to take this week to demonstrate humility towards your family or friends?

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 2:3 <sup>NLT</sup>

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*

**Lights in the World - Read Philippians 2:12-18**

**Bottom Line**

Imagine you're in a pitch-black room with some friends and you need to find the way out. You're stumbling around feeling the walls trying to find a door when suddenly it dawns on you, there's a flashlight in your backpack. You reach into your bag and find the flashlight but you discover a problem... no batteries.

God wants to work through us to bring the light of Jesus to our friends and family. He's given us the flashlight: his love, grace, and the ability to influence others. The part we control is the way we live and treat others which are the batteries that power this flashlight. What will you do with the batteries?

**Goal of Family Devotional**

Identify ways that as a family you can bring the light of Jesus to those around you through your words and actions.

**Just for Fun**

1. Have you ever had to walk through a place that was pitch black? How did you find your way around? How did you feel while doing it?

**Discussion Questions**

2. What does Philippians 2:13 tell us that God is doing?
3. Desire and power to do what pleases God are two things he wants to give us. Which of those do you have a lot of right now? Which could you use more of?
4. Paul says the world is full of crooked and perverse people. What sort of things in our world are really messed up?
5. What is one thing you find yourself complaining or arguing about a lot?
6. If we live clean and innocent lives, shining like bright lights, as Paul says, how could the people around us possibly change? What might happen to them?
7. Who has God put in your life that you can be a light to?

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 2:14-15 <sup>NLT</sup>

*Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.*

**Justification, Sanctification, Glorification - Read Philippians 3:1-4:1**

**Bottom Line**

Knowing Jesus radically changes a person. It changes how you see and engage the world around you. Paul is pleading to his readers to go further than just knowing *about* Jesus. He wants Christians to *know* Jesus. Christian maturity is marked by a growing experiential relationship with God granted to us through Jesus' sacrifice.

**Goal of Family Devotional**

To begin seeing the difference between knowing Jesus and knowing about Jesus. Encourage and develop ways to grow closer in our relationship *with* Jesus and not just information *about* him.

**Just for Fun**

1. Share a story about a friendship that you've been developing since the beginning of the school year.

**Discussion Questions**

2. How do you grow your friendships?
3. What is the difference between knowing someone and knowing about someone?
4. How does Paul view his achievements in v 5-6? What are some of the things from your past that cause you to be prideful?
5. How does pride hinder a growing friendship? How does pride cause you to treat your family members poorly?
6. Would you say you know Jesus personally or know about Jesus? What does it mean to personally know Jesus? How does knowing Jesus affect you?
7. What allows Paul to move forward in his pursuit to know God more intimately? (Hints in v13-14.)
8. What are some things from your past that you need to forget so that you can look forward to what lies ahead? (This is a great prayer request.)

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 3:8a <sup>NLT</sup>

*Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*

**Mature Faith - Read Philippians 4:2-9**

**Bottom Line**

A car is moved by a steering wheel and our lives are driven by our thoughts. What we spend our time thinking about usually translates to what we spend our time doing. Changing our minds can be the start of changing our lives. We can grow as Christians by being thoughtful about what we think about.

**Goal of Family Devotional**

As a family, reflect on the things you spend your time thinking about and see how they shape your life.

**Just For Fun**

1. Sometimes our brains are on overload and just need some time to mentally unwind. What's your favorite TV show, movie, book, game, or something else that helps you find some mental relaxation?

**Discussion Questions**

2. When is a time that prayer has been meaningful for you and why did it impact you so much?
3. Philippians 4:4-7 gives us some ways to deal with things we worry about. What are they?
4. Why does Paul encourage us to think about things that are honorable and pure? What does he think will happen to us if we do?
5. What consumes your thoughts? How is that affecting you?
6. As a family, what are ways you can help each other think about things that are pure and honorable?

**Memory Verse** - Philippians 4:8 <sup>NLT</sup>

*And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

## True Contentment - Read Philippians 4:10-20

### Bottom Line

Our culture is moving at a microwave meal, buy-it-now-pay-for-it-later pace. Moving at this pace keeps us busy--keeps us focused on what's next or what could be. We look to our own abilities to achieve our wants and needs. The problem with this cycle is that it's never-ending and keeps our attention on ourselves and our abilities. Paul reminds us that his need is met in knowing Jesus and being content with God's provision.

### Goal of Family Devotional

As a family, identify when God provided through good and bad times. Discuss the difference between your wants and your needs.

### Just For Fun

1. Can you name a time you lost something valuable to you and thought it was gone forever?
2. Have you ever been really stressed out over a test and thought you would do badly, only to end up getting a good grade on it?

### Discussion Questions

3. Why is it easier to focus on hard times than the times when God has provided for you?
4. What does *true* contentment mean?
5. Why is it important for us to live in true contentment?
6. When was a time in your life that was hard, but you knew God was providing for you? How can we develop a routine in our lives to become more aware of those times?
7. How can you as a family live in true contentment?

### Memory Verse - Philippians 4:12-13 <sup>NLT</sup>

*I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

## Additional Study Resources\* (Some of our favorites are in bold.)

### Sermon Series

[Philippians Sermons – The Village Church – Pastor Matt Chandler and Other Speakers](#)  
[Philippians – Redeemer Presbyterian Church – Pastor Timothy Keller and Other Speakers](#)  
[Philippians – Desiring God Ministries – Dr. John Piper](#)  
[Sermons in the book of Philippians – Grace to You – John MacArthur](#)  
[Humility: The Message of Philippians by Dr. Mark Dever](#)  
[Philippians - The Gospel Comes To Philippi by Dr. Albert Martin](#)  
[Philippians - Downtown Cornerstone Church – Pastor Adam Sinnott](#)

### Articles on Philippians

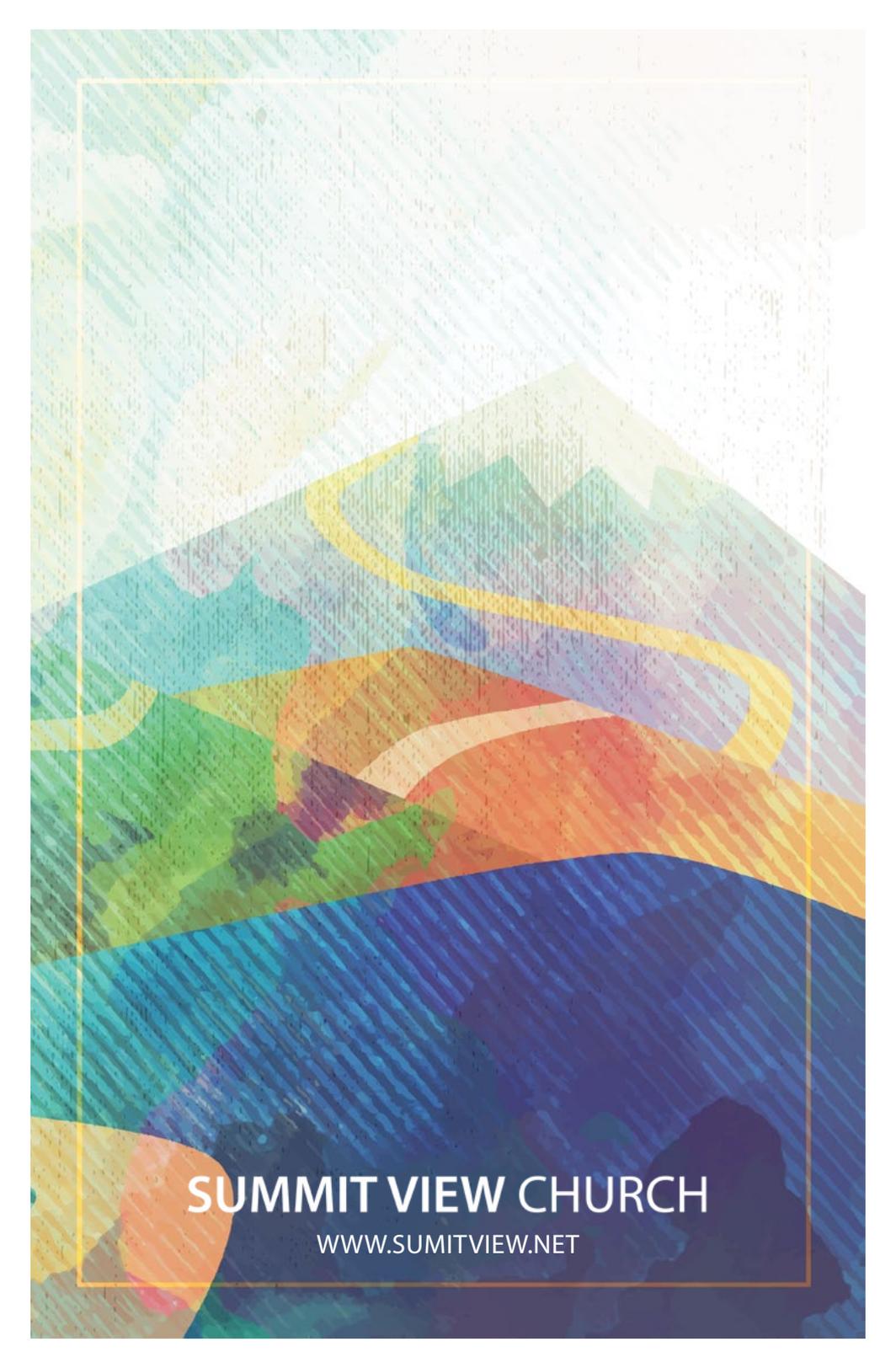
[Third Millennium Ministries - Overview of the Book of Philippians - Dr. Joseph R. Nally, Jr.](#)  
[Free PDF Commentary on Philippians by Vincent Cheung](#)  
[Philippians \(Sermon Manuscripts\) by Geoff Thomas](#)

### Book Recommendation

[To Live Is Christ to Die Is Gain Paperback by Matt Chandler](#)  
[Exalting Jesus in Philippians \(Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary\) by Tony Merida](#)  
[Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians by D. A. Carson](#)  
[Paul's Letter to the Philippians \(New International Commentary on the New Testament\) by Gordon D. Fee](#)  
[Philippians by John F. MacArthur](#)

### Other Resources

[Read Scripture: Philippians - The Bible Project with Dr. Tim Mackie of Western Seminary](#)  
[Overview of the Book of Philippians – Biblical Training – Dr. Bill Mounce](#)  
[Philippians overview by Dr. Craig Blomberg of BiblicalTraining.org](#)



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