



Anxious for Nothing

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

REBECCA CARRELL

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Paul's Letter to the

Philippians

Anxious for Nothing: Paul's Letter to the Philippians

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Introduction to the Study

The last time I saw my grandmother, she told me a story about a time I got sick as an infant.

My parents rushed me to the hospital when my fever spiked, and the doctor, concerned about infection, admitted me. Because my father had to work, my mother stayed with me around the clock. Then, exhausted after a day or two, she called her mom.

The nurse had given me an IV, and because I kept swiping at the needle, she placed it in the soft part of my head. My grandmother swaddled me up tight, held me close to her chest, and rocked me all night long.

“It’s my favorite memory of you,” she whispered as one tear trickled down her cheek.

My grandmother told me that story in September of 2019, just a few days before she passed away. I spent two nights with her in the hospice unit, and when she wasn’t sleeping, she regaled me with tales of her youth. Some of the stories rang familiar, but she also recounted many I’d never heard.

I loved listening to her narratives, because my grandmother had known me since the moment I entered the world, red like a lobster and howling like a banshee. But in that moment, she wanted *me* to know *her* and all the memories that would go with her when she died.

God created us to know and be known. As our Heavenly Father, God knows us intimately. David wrote, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me!” (Ps 139:1). And my grandmother wanting her grandchildren and great-grandchildren to know her reflects the character of our God, who also desires to be known by His people. He instructed the prophet Jeremiah to tell wayward Israel, “I will also give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me wholeheartedly” (Jer 24:7, NASB).¹

God wants you to know him.

He gave Moses the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah or *Pentateuch* so that the newborn nation of Israel could know their God and their history. The LORD inspired scribes, kings, poets, shepherds, and fig farmers to chronicle his instructions and interactions with his people so that future generations would remember and call on his name.

God came in the flesh in the person of Jesus, who will return in glory to permanently establish his kingdom on earth.

God has revealed himself in a million ways. Orion and the Big Dipper. Human relationships. The giraffe and the manatee. But throughout the ages, the Bible has served as God’s most comprehensive self-revelatory work. In it, we discover his epic plan for the world and humanity—a plan to reconcile his people back to himself and renew his creation.

We read the Bible to know God, to grow in his likeness, and to advance his kingdom on earth until—as the Nicene Creed states—“He comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead.”

¹ Unless specified, all Scriptures references are from the English Standard Version.

Our most worthy pursuit is to love the Lord, our God, with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and one way we love God fully is through finding out his story, his commands, and his desires for us through the faithful study of his word.

Shall we begin?

Understanding the Bible

The Scriptures are amazing. Consider just one entry about it in the *Guinness Book of World Records*:

Although it is impossible to obtain exact figures, there is little doubt that the Bible is the world's best-selling and most widely distributed book. A survey by the Bible Society concluded that around 2.5 billion copies were printed between 1815 and 1975, but more recent estimates put the number at more than 5 billion.²

Clearly, something about the Bible sets it apart from all other books—by sheer numbers alone. And to read it well, we need to understand what we are reading.

Rather than thinking of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures as merely a book in two major parts, let's look at the Bible as we would a library—a collection of books. It contains sixty-six books, in fact, written by about forty human authors inspired by God's Holy Spirit as an act of his self-revelation.

We categorize the books of the Bible into different genres, just as every library contains different types of literature, each in its proper section—fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's, young adults. Before we can understand the Bible's material, we need to know what kind of literature we're reading. Genre matters for interpretation, and we know this intuitively. We read a personal letter (“Dear Angela”) differently from how we read a fairy tale (“Once upon a time”). And these differ from how we understand a historical novel, a legal document or song lyrics—each of which employs different methods of communicating truth. The Old Testament is (loosely) divided into historical narrative, poetic and wisdom literature, and prophetic works. In the New Testament, the Gospels and Acts serve as historical narrative.³ Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell the story of the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus; Acts presents the birth, rise, and spread of the early church. Scholars categorize the rest of the New Testament as personal or corporate letters, most likely for circulation to area churches.⁴ A few, like Paul's letters to Timothy, are personal letters with ramifications for the church.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Bible is the thread of continuity tying it all together. Most evangelical scholars believe that Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament around 1400 BCE, and John the Revelator capped the canon in 90-ish CE. Such being the case, the Bible spans nearly 1,500 years, across three continents, and penned in three languages—Hebrew, a bit of Aramaic, and Greek. Yet despite the temporal, geographical, and linguistic spread, the Spirit's voice rings out from every page in a unified whole.

The Back of the Box

The year Apple released the Macintosh computer (1984), my family received two gifts that would forever change our Friday nights: a microwave oven and a VCR. My parents no longer had to corral three little girls into the back of the family Buick to get to the movies forty-five minutes early and spend inordinate

² <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/best-selling-book-of-non-fiction>; accessed on June 23, 2021.

³ Many scholars consider “Gospel” to be a genre in itself. For simplicity's sake, we will categorize the first four books of the New Testament as historical narrative.

⁴ The Book of Revelation is considered apocalyptic literature, but I propose that the seven letters in chapters 2–3 were meant to be circulated along with the rest of the revelator's work. Other portions of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments fall into the “apocalyptic” category, but space prohibits a lengthy discussion of such.

amounts of money on over-buttered popcorn. Now they could shell out a few bucks for a box of Orville Redenbacher and a videotape, and *voila!* Friday night movie night.

Blockbuster Video opened its doors a year later, and oh, the choices! One could spend more time winding one's way through the aisles reading VHS summaries than actually watching a movie. My sisters and I would make a beeline to our favorite genre, find a catchy title, and read the back of the box—which contained a description of what the movie was about. Even a major series with multiple installments had one unifying theme.

Have you ever wondered what the Bible is actually about? I was well into adulthood before realizing that, while the Bible consists of many books, it is still one book with one central theme telling one big story.

The Bible is about redemption.

Each story pressed on the pages of Scripture tells part of the greater story pointing to the one true God. This God created a universe and a people so that he could bless them and live in a loving relationship with them. But God's people (Adam and Eve) rejected God's one rule (Gen 3:6), forcing God to drive them from his paradise for their own protection (v. 24).

But all was not lost. Knowing his people would rebel, God had a plan in place to redeem both his people and his creation. The Bible is about God's plan to:

Raise up a deliverer.

Rescue His people from bondage.

Reconcile them to Himself.

Renew the face of the earth.

Dr. Elliott Johnson, a retired professor from Dallas Theological Seminary, says God does the same thing over and over but never the same way twice.

Raise up. Rescue. Reconcile. Renew.

Through the flood—God raised up Noah to rescue his family from the deluge and begin again by renewing the earth from the evil that permeated it.

Through Abraham—God called the patriarch and his family out of the land of Ur with the promise that through his offspring, one would come and bless the whole world.

Through Joseph—God raised up Jacob's tenth son to second-in-command in Egypt to save his family during a severe famine.

Through Moses—The man born a Hebrew and raised in Pharaoh's palace led the descendants of Jacob out of slavery to the land of Canaan, promised long ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Through Joshua—Moses's successor led God's people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land where they would live as twelve tribes.

Through the Judges—Each time Israel ensnared herself in idolatry, the LORD would hand her over to her enemies. Then, as God's people cried out to the LORD, he would raise judges who delivered the people, rescue them from their bondage, and reconcile them back to God.

Through King Saul—Israel’s first king delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines.

Through King David—God raised up a man after his own heart, taking him from the pastures to the palace and, after many military victories, gave him rest on every side.

Through the prophets—God continued to raise up godly men and women to call adulterous Israel to return to the LORD who created her.

And finally, through Jesus.

Jesus. *Immanuel*—which means *God with us*. Born of a virgin. Sent to live a sinless life to save sinful people. Raised up on a cross to deliver his people from the bondage of sin and death. Buried, dead, and resurrected. Through his blood, he has reconciled us forever to God the Father, and when he comes again, he will renew the face of the earth.

And his kingdom will have no end.

Our Place in the Story

The Mall of America resides in Bloomington, Minnesota, about twenty minutes south of Minneapolis. The shopping center holds the title of the largest mall in the United States and the second-largest in North America. It covers 5.6 million square miles and boasts 550 stores. You’ll find an indoor amusement park in the mall’s center that takes up more than seven acres. To give you some context, you could fit nine Yankee’s Stadiums inside its walls and still have room to stretch. And if that weren’t impressive enough, the Mall of America also has its own zip code.⁵

It’s 55425.

You really can’t appreciate it until you see it for yourself. The first time I crossed the threshold, I could scarcely take it in. Imagine four giant malls, each with four floors, with roller coasters and a Ferris wheel in the middle of it all.

The first thing you have to do when you get there—if you have any hope of getting where you want to go—is to find one of those giant walk-up mall maps. Then you look for the spot that says:

You Are Here → 

More than simply showing you where you are, the map shows you where you are in relation to everything else. If we want to understand where we are in God’s big story, we have to know where we are concerning the rest of the story. We can break up the story of the Bible like this:

⁵ Statistics taken from <https://discoverthecities.com/how-big-is-the-mall-of-america/>. Information is current as of April 2, 2020. Accessed July 3, 2021.

Creation and Fall: God creates the heavens and the earth and places his people in the garden to multiply, rule, and subdue the earth. The man and the woman disobey, and God casts them from his presence with the assurance that one day he will raise up a deliverer who will rescue them from bondage and reconcile them to himself.

The Flood: When God looks out over his creation and sees only evil in humanity's heart, he raises up Noah to build an ark and call people to repentance. God allows the floodwaters to cover the face of the earth. When the waters recede, he sends forth Noah and his family to multiply, rule, and subdue the recreated world.

The Patriarchs: God calls Abraham out from among his people, promises him that one day his descendants will live in the land of promise, and that through his offspring, God will bless the world.

The Exodus: God's people, now living in Egypt, groan under the weight of Egyptian oppression, so God raises up Moses to rescue them from bondage and lead them into the land of promise.

The Promised Land: Joshua leads the Israelites into the Promised Land where they live as twelve tribes, a united monarchy, and then a divided kingdom.

The Exile: After giving his people countless chances to turn back to the God who brought them out of Egypt, God allows the Assyrians and Babylonians to overthrow Israel and Judah and force them out of the land.

The Return: After seventy years in captivity, King Cyrus of Persia allows a remnant of Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Jesus: After 400 years of silence, a prophet speaks again in Israel: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 1:4–6). Jesus, born of a virgin in the city of David, comes to rescue his people from bondage and reconcile them to God the Father through himself.

As predicted in the Scriptures, Jesus's own people reject him (Ps 69:8; Isa 53:3) and crucify him as a criminal (Isa 53:12), but he rises from the dead (Ps 16:10; 49:15) and ascends into heaven (Ps 24:7–10).

The Church Expansion Age: On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven and fills believers with gifts and power. Since that day, faithful servants of Jesus have been carrying out God's initial command to humankind: Multiply (make disciples), fill the earth (reach all people groups), and subdue it (teaching them the ways of Jesus).⁶

Jesus' Return: Before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that no one could know the day or hour of his return (Matt 24:36). Just as the prophets of old foretold his birth, we have hundreds of prophecies pointing toward his return. Therefore, God calls the church to live as a people prepared to meet their king at any moment. When Jesus comes back, he will gather his people to himself and institute his reign on earth.

The Eternal Kingdom: The patriarchs rested on promises. We stand on promises fulfilled. The Book of Revelation maps out the last days before humanity—resurrected and glorified—makes

⁶ Gen 1:28; Matt 28:19–20.

their final dwelling place on the recreated earth with Christ the King in our midst. The trials and hardships of this life will fade like the morning mist. For one day soon, God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4–5).

This is the story of the Bible—God’s epic plan to raise up a deliver, rescue his people from bondage, and reconcile them to himself. And he shall renew the face of the earth.

The Kingdom Timeline



Creation → → Fall → → → Flood → → → Promises and Patriarchs → → → Exodus →



Church Expansion ← Jesus ← ← ← Return ← ← ← Exile ← ← ← Promised Land ←



→ → → Return of Jesus → → → Eternal Kingdom



YOU ARE
HERE

How to Use This Study

This six-week study includes six lectures and five weeks of curriculum. We will begin with the introductory lesson. Then each week, we'll have five days of homework to complete before the following lecture. We have structured the assignments in the following way:

Prepare Your Heart: This optional step helps you enter into the right heart-posture before God. We will reflect on a verse from the Psalms that describes an attribute or characteristic of the Lord. We will offer up both our praise and worries to the Lord and reframe our anxieties in light of God's truth.

Observe the Text: You will read the book of Philippians through (just four short chapters) each week, recording observations and questions along the way.

Understand the Text: How many times have you read a paragraph or page and then asked yourself, "What in the world did I just read?" Consider yourself in good company. In this step, we will analyze words and sentences. We may use an English dictionary or skip around the Scriptures to look at similar verses and passages to increase our comprehension.

Live the Text: God has preserved his word through the ages so that we could know him and know his will for the world, the church, our communities, and our lives. In short, the Bible should change us. At the end of each lesson, we reflect on how we should live in light of our discoveries.

Materials

To get the most out this study you will need the following items:

- Bible

We have provided a double-spaced copy of Philippians in the New English Translation (NET) for you in the back of your workbook. When asked to fill in blanks, use this translation. For all other purposes, feel free to use your own Bible.

Different translations serve different purposes. As we work our way through the text, consider using either the New American Standard Bible (NASB), New English Translation (NET), English Standard Version (ESV), New International Version (NIV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), or New Living Translation (NLT). We ask (but do not insist) that you refrain from The Message, The Passion Translation, or the King James Version.

- Colored pencils or pens

Come prepared to color! We will circle, underline, and shade things like repeated words, themes, and phrases to bring details to forefront.

- Merriam-Webster's English Dictionary (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>)
- Notebook (in case you run out of space in the workbook)

How to Approach the Scriptures

1. Intentionally

Every year around January first, many determined Christians take to the internet looking for a Bible reading plan. One popular choice is to read the Bible in a year. We reap many benefits from this type of program, including, when we approach the Scriptures chronologically, a better understanding of the story-arch of the Bible. And that's a great approach—as is any plan that helps us immerse ourselves in God's word.

But for this study, we will s-l-o-w things down. Rather than placing ourselves on a deadline-oriented schedule, we will take small, chewable bites at a time and allow our hearts and minds to digest the life-giving words.

2. Attentively

Slowing down allows us to read the Bible carefully and closely, noticing the details. We will pay attention to familiar passages that our eyes might otherwise skip over. We'll ask the text questions, like, "Why did the author say this?" and "Why did he say this in this particular place?" Sometimes we'll look up words in a dictionary or paraphrase paragraphs to grasp what the author means.

3. Repetitively

The psalmist wrote, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Ps. 119:11). When used as a transitive verb, "store" means to "lay away" or "accumulate." It also means to "furnish" or "supply."⁷ When we *accumulate* God's words in our hearts, these words *supply* us with peace, wisdom, and hope. Repetitive reading tucks Scripture into our minds, transforming us from the inside out.

4. Interactively

We will approach our interactive Bible reading in two ways. First, we'll talk to the author. Paul wrote to his protégé, Timothy, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). God used approximately forty people to write the books of the Bible, but he was the guiding force over it all. Therefore, we'll begin each reading with prayer, asking the Lord to open our hearts and minds to his truths.

Our second approach involves reading in community. As humans with blind spots, we will benefit significantly from discussing our insights together as a group each week before the teaching. My dear friend and mentor, Dr. Sandra Glahn, says, "The more eyes on the text, the better." That means we need the young and the seasoned, those with white, black, and brown skin, males and females alike with eyes on the Scriptures—from all walks of life and all pockets of the globe—to minimize our risk of misinterpretation.

5. Charitably

The Christian faith consists of more than two hundred denominations in the United States alone and more than forty-five thousand globally⁸. That's not to say we have 45,000 doctrinal views. Many denominations have united to express their unity. Nevertheless, within Christendom we have millions of subcultures and ways of seeing the text.

⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/store>

⁸ Donavyn Coffey, "Why Does Christianity Have So Many Denominations" on *LiveScience.com*, February 27, 2021. Accessed on June 18, 2021.

<https://www.livescience.com/christianity-denominations.html>

As we read the Scriptures together, we will surely disagree on issues and topics at times. Let us disagree agreeably as co-laborers in Christ.

Lesson One: Lecture Notes

Who wrote the letter to the Philippians? _____

Who is the letter to? _____

Why do you think the author/s wrote this letter? _____

What are the themes of this letter? _____

Additional Notes:

Week One: Philippians 1:1-11

Week 1—Day 1

Prepare Your Heart

As we begin our study of Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, let’s get honest before God. We study the Bible to know God better and to know his desire for our lives. But this same God also wants to be actively engaged in our day-to-day activities. He wants us to talk to him. In the space below, write out the things you are most worried about today. _____

Psalm 9:9–10 – The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Use an English dictionary to define “stronghold”: _____

If God is your stronghold, what does this mean for you? _____

Talk to God

Heavenly Father, you spoke the universe into existence. You number and name the stars. Your word tells me that you knew me before I was born and have even numbered the hairs on my head. Thank you for loving me and caring about every detail of my life. Thank you for calling me into a relationship with you. As I sit down today to read the book of Philippians, will you speak to me? Will you reveal yourself to me? I want to know you and trust you, Father. I love you. By the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Week 1—Day 2

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 62:7 –8 – On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Use merriam-webster.com to define “refuge”: _____

What are you worried about today? _____

Will you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, thank you for promising to be my refuge and stronghold. I praise you because you are a safe place to pour out my heart. You know everything in it, yet you still want to hear from me. Father, as I read your words in the Bible today, please speak to me and reveal things about yourself to me. Would you please help me to stay focused? Please help me to notice details. Thank you for the gift of the Scriptures. I love you, Father, and I want to trust you more. I pray these things in Jesus’ mighty name. Amen.

Observe the Text

In the lecture, we discussed four themes in the letter to the Philippians—Unity, Union with Christ, Friendship, and Joy. Read Philippians 1:1–11 in your Bible or the printed text in the back of your workbook. Any time you see a reference to a theme, highlight the word(s), sentence, or verse in the following way:

- Unity – orange
- Friendship – green
- Joy – yellow

What stood out to you? What questions do you have? _____

Reread verse 1. How does the author describe himself? _____

Understand the Text

Fill in the following chart by looking up the Scripture, noting the intended audience, the author, and how the author describes himself:

	Letter Recipients	Author/Description
Romans 1:1, 7		
1 Corinthians 1:1–2		
2 Corinthians 1:1		
Galatians 1:1–2		
Ephesians 1:1		
Colossians 1:1–2		
1 Timothy 1:1–2		
2 Timothy 1:1		
Titus 1:1–2		

Did you notice anything different about the way Paul identifies himself (and Timothy) to the Philippians? If so, what? _____

Let's pause to dig a little deeper and understand what the original audiences thought when they heard Paul's various greetings. We need to take a closer look at two terms in the original Greek:

Apostolos (ἀπόστολος) – this is where we get our English word “apostle.” *Apostolos* means “sent one” or “messenger.”

“Apostle” became a designated office in the early church. Disciple means “learner” or “student.” In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus changed the disciples' status when he gave the great commission and the twelve disciples (minus Judas Iscariot) became apostles. In Acts 1:12–26 we read how the apostles cast lots to determine Judas's replacement.

The second term we will look at is *doulos*.

Doulos (δοῦλος) - slave; to being under someone's total control, slavish, servile, subject.⁹

Chances are, your Bible phrases Philippians 1:1 this way:

Paul and Timothy, **servants** of Christ Jesus...

Translating ancient documents presents some challenges. To better understand the way the biblical authors used words (such as *doulos*), scholars will look at how other people around the same time period used the words in non-biblical works. Greek expert William Arndt notes that, outside of the Bible, *doulos* always meant slave.¹⁰

The Philippian church consisted primarily of Greek/Roman individuals. According to theologian Moisés Silva, hearing *doulos* would have immediately grabbed the believers' attention:

In ancient Greece, personal freedom was a prized possession. To be independent of others and to manage one's own life as one chooses was the essence of such freedom. The δοῦλος [*doulos*], on the other hand, belonged not to himself but to someone else.¹¹ Because δουλεύω [*douleō* – the verb form of *doulos*] involved the abrogation of one's own autonomy and the subordination of one's will to that of another, Greeks typically felt contempt for the position of a slave. To be sure, slaves could take part in the domestic worship and in many cases, they were treated humanely (they even had an equal status with free citizens in the Eleusinian mysteries). Yet, on the whole, the life of the slave was one of unrelieved compulsory labor and service in the household and in public works.¹²

There is no question that, when Paul's original audience heard *doulos*, they did not think of a servant the way we might—someone who cleans homes, cooks meals, or mows lawns for a living. They thought of slaves.

⁹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 259.

¹⁰ Ibid., 260.

¹¹ (c.f. K. H. Rengstorff in *TDNT* 2:261) – this parenthetical note is included in the quotation cited. I removed it and added it as a footnote.

¹² Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 767–768.

Does this change the way you read Paul's greeting? If yes, how? _____

Why do you think Paul chose this term to describe himself to the Philippians? _____

Live the Text

Read John 13:1–17.

In light of this passage and of Paul and Timothy's position before the Christians at Philippi, how should we live before God and each other? Take a few minutes to think about what this looks like in your day-to-day life, and write your thoughts below.

Week 1—Day 3

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 5:11–12 – But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Use an English dictionary to define “favor”: _____

If God covers you with his favor, that means that everything you go through, everything that comes your way must first pass through his shield of favor. What does this indicate to us about the wisdom and knowledge of God? _____

What are you worried about today? _____

Talk to God

Heavenly Father, your word assures me that you are my refuge and my stronghold in times of trouble. How wonderful to know that your favor covers me like a shield. Because I know that you love me, I can trust you when difficulties arise. Father, as I prepare my heart to study the Scriptures, please give me insight and understanding. I want to know you more, Lord. Please be my heart’s delight. I pray this in the mighty name of Jesus and by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:1–11 in the text provided in your workbook or your Bible and mark it in the following way:

- Blue circle – all logical relationships reflected in the language, like *so that, therefore, in order to, because, for, since, or for this reason*.
- Purple underline – temporal (time) relationships like *now, immediately, before, after, or the next day*.
- Brown underline – contrasts and correlations such as *either-or, whether-or, if-then, both-and, but, although, yet, or however*.

Did anything strike you? Do you have any questions? List them here: _____

Understand the Text

To whom is this letter addressed? Fill in the blanks using the text in the back of your workbook:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To all the _____ in Christ
Jesus who are at Philippi, with the _____ and
_____.

Our introductory lecture discussed the necessity of setting the context every time we approach the Scriptures, whether we are looking at a verse or a book. We talked about the importance of understanding how the original recipients of Paul’s letter understood his message. Because of this, we need to dig a little deeper into the meaning of his words.

What comes to your mind when you think of a “saint?” _____

Perhaps you grew up in a church tradition that recognized or even venerated “the saints”—men and women who had served God faithfully during their lives and were believed to have performed remarkable deeds or miracles. But what does the word “saint” mean in the Bible?

Hagios (ἅγιος): as an adjective, an item or person dedicated or consecrated to God.

Originally the term meant “a cultic concept, of the quality possessed by things and persons that could approach a divinity.”¹³ In other words, to approach God, one had to possess the quality of holiness.

We see such an emphasis on consecration in the Old Testament:

Exodus 40:9–15 – “Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy. You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy. You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.”

In this passage, God is instructing Moses on how to assemble the tabernacle. The tabernacle served as God’s mobile temple—his dwelling place. The Levites carried, constructed, and deconstructed the structure as the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness.

List the objects and people that were to be made holy: _____

How were Aaron and his sons to be made holy? _____

Becoming holy involves an element of purifying or cleansing. Read the following verses and describe how the readers/hearers were cleansed:

Ephesians 5:25–27 – _____

John 15:3 – _____

John 17:17 – _____

Merriam-webster.com lists four definitions for “sanctify.” List them below:

1. To _____ to a _____ OR to religious use.
2. To _____ from _____ : _____
3. A: To _____ or _____ sacredness, inviolability, or respect to.
B: To give _____ or _____ to.

¹³ Arndt, 10.

4. To make _____ of _____ or piety.

What do you think Paul means when he calls the believers “saints?” _____

There are three components to Christian sainthood.

I. Justification – being declared righteous before God.

Romans 3:23–26 – For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness because, in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How are we justified? _____

Why are we justified? _____

Who justifies us? _____

II. Sanctification – being conformed into the image and likeness of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

How are we sanctified? _____

Who sanctifies us? _____

III. Glorification – being transformed into our eternal state before Christ.

Romans 8:30 – And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Who glorifies us? _____

Live the Text

If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and if you confess him as your Lord and Savior, then you are among those whom Paul calls “saints.” What does this mean and how should you live in light this truth? _____

Week 1—Day 4

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 138:8 – The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Who will fulfill your purpose for you? _____

What endures forever? _____

Talk to God

Verse eight offers the closing words of a beautiful psalm of gratitude. You stand before the Lord as a saint: declared righteous, being conformed to the likeness of Christ, and one day you will stand before him glorified. All of the hurts and heartaches of this life will fade to a distant memory. In the space provided, write out a prayer of thanks. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:1–11 in a different version of the Bible. Bible Gateway offers many translations online for free. Below are some links you can type into your browser.

- Christian Standard Bible (CSB):
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+1&version=CSB>
- New English Translation (NET):
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+1&version=NET>
- New International Version (NIV):
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201&version=NIV>
- New Living Translation (NLT):
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+1&version=NLT>

Did you notice anything new? List any observations or questions here: _____

Understand the Text

Yesterday we read that Paul addressed his letter “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.” We know that, while the Bible was not written *to* us, it was written *for* us. Therefore, we can include ourselves in the intended recipients of this letter. Paul also included two other groups in his address: The _____ and _____.

What do these offices tell us about the church at Philippi? _____

Paul records three reasons he thanks God for the Philippian believers. Look back at your marked copy of the text in the back of your workbook. The words you underlined and circled will provide clues as to what those reasons are.

When does Paul express his gratitude? (v. 3) _____

Reason 1 (vv. 4–5): _____

Reason 2 (v. 6): _____

Reason 3 (vv. 7–8): _____

Why is Paul confident? (v. 6): _____

What is the “good work” that God had begun in the Philippians? _____

To understand the “day of Jesus Christ,” look up the following Scriptures and paraphrase what the day represents

- 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4
- 2 Timothy 1:12
- 1 John 4:17–18

Paul uses courtroom imagery in Philippians 1:8 as he makes an oath and calls God as his witness. What does Paul want to convey to the Philippians? _____

Paul uses two powerful words in v. 1:8 to get his point across: “For God is my witness, how I **long** (*epithō*) for you all with the **affection** (*splagchnon*) of Christ Jesus.”

Epithō (ἐπιποθῶ) – to have a strong desire for something with implication of need, long for, desire.¹⁴

Splagchnon (σπλάγχνον) – the inward parts of a body, including (especially) the viscera, inward parts, entrails.¹⁵

In Paul’s day, various inner organs were thought to have a psychological function. People believed the heart was the seat of the will or decision-making, and the bowels were the source of affection or emotion. See how other authors used *splagchnon* to get a feel for the word’s breadth:

Matthew 9:36 – When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had *compassion* for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Matthew 20:24 – And Jesus *in pity* touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

¹⁴ Arndt, 377.

¹⁵ Ibid., 938.

Observe the Text

By now, you are good and familiar with the first eleven verses of Philippians, so let's mix it up a bit. Read Philippians 1:1–11 out loud.

Did you notice anything new today? If so, list it here: _____

What is Paul's prayer for the Philippian believers? (v. 9) _____

Understand the Text

The Greek language had four different terms for love:

- *Philia* (φιλία) – friendly affection; a bond among friends; love between equals
- *Eros* (ἔρως) – romantic love; sexual passion
- *Storge* (στοργή) – familial love, particularly between parents and children
- *Agape* (ἀγάπη) – self-sacrificing or unconditional love¹⁶

Paul prays that the believers' *agape* love would abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment. We find the best explanation of *agape* love in 1 Corinthians 13.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–13 in the ESV (or your own translation) and then fill in the blanks:

Love is (v. 4–5) _____ and _____.

Love does not _____ or _____.

Love is not _____ or _____.

It does not _____.

It is not _____ or _____.

Love does not (v. 6) _____ at _____ but

_____ with the _____.

¹⁶ Carlos Astorga, R. van Dyck, S. J. Murphy, V. van Dyck, "The Gospel in Philippians: Displaying God in Godless Times," in *Field Notes* (Plano: Sacra Script Ministries, 2013), 25.

Love (v. 7) _____ all things, _____ all things, _____ all things, _____ all things.
Love (v. 8) _____.

Paul does not simply pray for the Philippians' love to abound, but that their love would abound with *knowledge* and *all discernment*. This begs a follow-up question:

Knowledge of what? _____

Use merriam-webster.com to define "discernment": _____

Reread verses 9–11. Why does Paul pray that they will grow in love, knowledge, and discernment? (v. 10) _____

What is Paul's desired outcome for the Philippians? (v. 11a) _____

What is Paul's desired outcome for God? (v. 11b) _____

Live the Text

In the space provided, write a definition of *agape* Christian love in your own words and list three areas in your life where you could love others better. What steps can you take today to love well?

Digging Deeper

Greek Keyword Study: *Koinōnia* (Κοινωνία)

Philippians 1:5 – Because of your partnership (*koinōnia*) in the gospel from the first day until now...

The concept of *koinōnia* weaves its way through Scripture like a silver thread. If the Bible were a tapestry, you'd see the strings of *koinōnia* pulling God's people together and connecting them as one.

Typically translated as “fellowship,” “partnership,” or “participation,” the word has morphed somewhat through the ages. In the fourth and fifth centuries BCE, Plato used *koinōnia* to describe both business dealings¹⁷ and intimate relationships in which two people invested in each other.¹⁸ Around the same time, the Athenian playwright Euripides used the term synonymously with sexual intercourse.¹⁹ The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century CE about the Genesis creation story, said, “But...he [God] saw that Adam had no female companion, no society (*koinōnia*), for there was no such created.”²⁰ Elsewhere he used *koinōnia* as a term for dwelling together in community and, like Euripides, for marital relations.

In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), the word carries the same sense of sexual intercourse, living life together, and mutually beneficial relationships.

The New Testament authors used *koinōnia* to paint a picture of the Christian life. Luke, writing to Theophilus, described the activities of the early church, saying, “They were devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship (*koinōnia*), to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42, NET).

So how do we live in *koinōnia*?

Koinōnia involves more than partnering with others or getting together with friends. *Koinōnia* means living life as part of the body of Christ.

Consider your body for a moment. Currently, I am suffering from a condition known as sesamoiditis. The tendons that house the two tiny sesamoid bones in my left foot are inflamed, causing pain that leaves every part of me affected—my knee aches from overcompensating. My hips and back are misaligned from limping—even my mind buckles under the stress of it.

In other words, my body is participating (*koinōnia*) in the suffering of my foot.

To live in *koinōnia* means to share in the lives of others—the good, the bad, and the mundane. When one member struggles, the others step in. If one person triumphs, the whole group celebrates. *Koinōnia* looks like the outward-faced, other-centered, interconnected life. In a world that prioritizes the individual's rights, *koinōnia* lays those rights down so that others might thrive. It takes the pressure off. We don't have

¹⁷ Plato, Republic, 343d; v/vi b.c.

¹⁸ Plato, Gorgias, 507e; v/vi b.c.

¹⁹ Euripides, Bacchae, 1276; v b.c.

²⁰ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 29.

to do it all, be it all, or know it all because we live to delight in Christ. In *koinōnia*, we love Christ by loving others. We receive his love, in part, through the grace of others.

We were created by a God who exists in triune *koinōnia* between God-the-Father, Jesus-the-Son, and the Holy Spirit. When God calls us to salvation, he invites us to participate in the *koinōnia* of the Trinity and the *koinōnia* of the body of Christ here on earth.

Now What?

Some years ago, my dear friend Kelley and I were sipping rich, artisan coffee at a quaint breakfast joint in downtown McKinney, Texas. She knew my family had recently joined a new church and asked if we'd found a home group yet.

When I told her that my schedule didn't allow for it (two kids, full-time job, seminary), she arched a brow and gave me a look.

"Mm-m-m, I don't think so," she said. "You need to make time for fellowship."

Kelley was right. When we put projects over people, our priorities are out of whack. Our primary mission is to love people, because people are whom Christ came to save. He has given us to each other as gifts to strengthen, sharpen, and shape us as we grow in Christ-likeness.

Do you have people to mentor? Are people investing in your growth? Read the verses below and ask the Lord how you might create space in your busy life to more fully enter into the beautiful *koinōnia* he desires for us.

Verses for Reflection or Memorization:

- 1 Corinthians 1:9
- 1 Corinthians 10:16
- 2 Corinthians 8:4
- Philemon 6
- Hebrews 13:16
- 1 John 1:6–7

Week Two: Philippians 1:12-2:4

Week 2—Day 1

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 93:1-2 – The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

Use merriam-webster.com/dictionary/established to define “established”: _____

The psalmist recognizes God as the universal king over the entire world. Perhaps you, like many of us, feel as though the world is spinning out of control. In the space provided, make a list of the things you are worried about today. _____

Look back over your list. God’s sovereignty extends over everything you wrote down. Scripture tells us that his word firmly establishes his world. When our circumstances overwhelm us, we can look to the One who is never overwhelmed, for his throne has been established for all eternity.

Talk to God

Take a moment to thank him for his grasp on your life. Remember, it’s not about how hard we hold onto God. It’s about worshipping the God who has promised to hold us for eternity.

Week 2—Day 2

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 97:1–2 – The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad! Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Fill in the blanks: “Let the _____ rejoice; let the many _____
_____ be glad!”

According to psalmist, the entire earth—from the furthest coast to the east to the furthest coast to the west—rejoices in the king of the universe. Take a moment and list five things you can rejoice in today:

Use merriam-webster.com to define the following terms:

Righteousness: _____

Justice: _____

God’s very throne sits on righteousness and justice. Why is this a cause to rejoice? _____

Talk to God

Take a moment to thank him for his sovereignty, righteousness, and justice today. Ask him to help you live in a manner that pleases him.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:12–2:4 in your Bible or the printed text in the back of your workbook. Do you see any words, sentences, or verses that reference the themes of this letter? If so, highlight them accordingly:

- Unity – orange
- Friendship – green
- Joy – yellow

What stood out to you? _____

What questions do you have? _____

Understand the Text

Setting the Context

Philippians 1:13 references the imperial guard, the palace guard, or the praetorian guard, depending on your Bible translation. All three terms refer to an elite unit of the Roman Army that served as the emperor's (or Caesar's) personal bodyguards. Working in such close proximity to the emperor, they received the best training, the best salaries, and the best benefits of any unit in the army.²¹ They were able to rise in the ranks and assume positions of power. Because of this, they had influence on their communities. In short, they were the "Secret Service" or "Navy Seals" of ancient Rome.²²

Re-read 1:12–15 and answer the following questions. Remember, you may not get all of the answers today, and *that's okay*. We will discuss the homework in the next lecture.

What is Paul referring to in v. 12 that has served to advance the gospel (see v. 7)? _____

How has this occurrence served to advance the gospel? _____

Paul speaks of two groups of people who know of his imprisonment. Who are they (v. 13)? _____

Who do you think "all the rest" are? _____

What is the result of these groups knowing about Paul's imprisonment (v. 14)? _____

Why do you suppose Paul's imprisonment made his fellow Christian brothers and sisters **more** confident to share God's word? _____

²¹ Astorga, 37.,

²² Lynn Cohick, *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 45.

If we wanted to title verses 1:12–18, we could call the section “The Gospel Goes Forth!” It’s as though Paul is saying, “You can chain me up and lock me in, but you can’t restrain the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Let’s take a closer look at verse 12 in the NIV:

Philippians 1:12 – Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to *advance* the gospel.

The word “advanced” is the Greek word *prokopé*:

Prokopé (προκοπή) – a movement forward to an improved state, progress, advancement, furtherance.²³

We see this word again in verse 25 when Paul decides to remain “for the *progress* and joy in the faith” of the Philippian believers. Paul uses the same word to paint two similar pictures.

[*Prokopé*] was also a term used to describe the activity of army engineers who pioneered the advance of a military unit tracking behind. Paul was a pioneering missionary who took the gospel to Philippi, and now this gospel was advancing into new spheres of influence in Rome. Paul’s first use of *advance* is in the context of *pioneering evangelism*. The second use, translated *progress*, concerns the *progress of the Philippian believers in the faith*.²⁴

Live the Text

Paul’s hardships, not his triumphs, led to the advance of the gospel throughout Rome. Think back on the past twelve to eighteen months. What difficulties have you endured? _____

How do you think these trials could “actually [serve] to advance the gospel?” _____

²³ Arndt, 871.

²⁴ Astorga, 35.

Week 2—Day 3

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 24:1–2 – The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

In late spring of 2020, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) conducted a survey to discover why Americans were so stressed.²⁵ Three issues rose to the top:

- The future of the US as a nation – 81 percent
- The pandemic as a whole – 80 percent
- Access to food, healthcare, and other basic needs – 70 percent

These three stress points touch our most basic need—that of security.

The Most High God who sits on the highest throne loves you and calls you his dearly loved child. He created everything. Everything belongs to him. Share your concerns with him today:

Let’s switch roles. Pretend *you* are in God’s position. Knowing that your precious child is concerned and worried about the future, what would you say to yourself? Say only things that you know are true from God’s word. _____

²⁵ “What Americans are Most Stressed About” in *USA Today* on USAToday.com. March 10, 2021, accessed on July 12 2021. <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/life/health-wellness/2021/03/10/what-americans-are-stressed-about-the-most/43453577/>

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:12–2:4 in the text provided in your workbook or your Bible and mark it in the following way:

- Blue circle – all logical relationships reflected in the language, like *so that, therefore, in order to, because, for, since, or for this reason*.
- Purple underline – all temporal (time) relationships, like *now, immediately, before, after, or the next day*.
- Brown underline – contrasts and correlations such as *either-or, whether-or, if-then, both-and, but, although, yet, and however*.

Did anything strike you? Do you have any questions? List them here: _____

Understand the Text

Re-read 1:15–18.

Yesterday in our homework, we saw that Paul rejoiced over the spread of the gospel. In today's reading we will see how he drills down into the motives of preachers in the Philippians' world. Fill in the blanks from the NET translation:

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ from _____ and _____, but others from _____.

What is the motive of the latter group (v. 16)? _____

Why is Paul imprisoned (v.16)? _____

What are the motives of the former group? Give three answers (v. 17):

- From _____ and _____
- Not _____
- "Because they think they can cause _____ for

me in my _____.”

The Greek words for “envy” (φθόνος or *ftthonos*) and “rivalry” (ἔρις or *eris*) appear together elsewhere in Paul’s letters. Let’s take a look.

Romans 1:29 – They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of *envy*, murder, *strife*, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips...

Galatians 5:19–21 – Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, *strife*, jealousy, fits of anger, *rivalries*, dissensions, divisions, *envy*, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Timothy 6:4 – He is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce *envy*, *dissension*, slander, evil suspicions...

Theologian Gordon Fee notes that in his instructions to the Romans and the Galatians, Paul describes the behavior of those “who will not inherit the kingdom of God.”²⁶ In his words to his protégé, Timothy, Paul directs his sharp words toward anyone who “teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness” (1 Tim 6:4). In other words, false teachers.

Paul could very well be addressing unbelievers who had it in for him. But before we leap to that conclusion, let’s look again at Philippians 1:14–15 using the NIV:

1 Philippians 1:14–15 – And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. ¹⁵It is true that **some** preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill (emphasis mine).

In verse 15, the word “some” functions as a pronoun. To whom is Paul referring (v. 14)?

The Greek word that the NIV has translated to “brothers and sisters” is *adelphos* (ἀδελφός). In the 132 occurrences of this word in Paul’s letters, he uses it to refer to Christians (male or female) every single time.

What does this observation lead us to consider about the ones preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry?

Do you have any experience with people operating out of selfish motives? What was it and how did it make you feel? _____

²⁶ Gordon Fee, “Paul’s Letter to the Philippians” in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 119.

Live the Text

In an era of social media influencers and platform building, Paul’s words cut to the heart. Anyone can do, say, or post all of the right things—most of us can “play Christian” pretty well—but God looks past the exterior down to the motives.

Others see what we do. Only God knows why we do it.

But look at Paul’s reaction to preachers with selfish intentions (NIV):

Philippians 1:18 – But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice...

Elsewhere, Paul denounces selfish thinking (Phil 2). But as he sits in prison helpless to do anything about those preaching with wrong motives, in essence, Paul says, “Who cares? Who cares if people preach Christ for power, money, or fame? Don’t you see? They’re preaching Christ!”

Paul’s attitude toward those who are “in it” for all the wrong reasons tells us two things:

1. We can stop worrying about the motives of others outside of our reach.

That’s God’s concern—not ours.

2. We should certainly pay attention to our own motives.

I have a list of heart-check questions I often ask myself about social media. But they could apply to any social interaction. Answer them honestly. You don’t have to write the answers out.



Heart Check

Briefly look over your past 5–10 social media posts.

Why did you post what you posted? _____

What need were you meeting? _____

Can you think of a recent time that you did something just to be seen? Or publicly acknowledged?

Can you think of a recent time that you were secretly glad when someone else went through a tough time?

When you go above and beyond with no recognition, how do you feel? _____

Week 2—Day 4

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 24:8 – Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!

Use merriam-webster.com to define “mighty”: _____

Now, also using merriam-webster.com, look up “battle,” paying particular attention to definition number two: _____

Paul told the Christians in Ephesus that they were engaged in an ongoing battle they couldn’t always see (Eph 6:12). What battle do you find yourself in right now? _____

One thing that strikes me in our definition of “battle” is the word “extended.” My struggle with generalized anxiety dates back to my sixth-grade year. I know what it’s like to persevere through a long fight. Battles exhaust us. Our strength has limits, but God draws on infinite power. Where we feel weak, he rises in might. Tell God what you need today and ask him to help you in the battle.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:1—2:4 and mark every reference to Jesus Christ with an X. References include “Christ,” “Christ Jesus,” “Lord,” and “him” when the referent is Christ.

How many X’s? _____

When my sisters and I were young, we wanted a Nintendo so we could play Super Mario Brothers. As Christmas approached, we developed a plan.

Ask mom and dad for a Nintendo. Never stop asking.

After one particular barrage, my mother looked at us and saying, “You girls have one-track minds. Enough!”

(It worked, by the way. Under the tree that year sat one shiny new Nintendo set.)

Paul, likewise, has a one-track mind. Let’s review.

1. Why was Paul imprisoned (v. 13)? _____
2. Paul’s imprisonment resulted in the Philippians growing in confidence. What was the source of their confidence (hint: **not** Paul or his imprisonment) (v. 14)? _____

3. Who were the envious people preaching about (v. 15)? _____
4. Who were the loving people preaching about (v. 15)? _____
5. Why did Paul rejoice (v. 18)? _____

Re-read verses 18–26.

If Paul had a motto, what would it say? Use your own words: _____

Understand the Text

Why does Paul rejoice? Fill in the blanks from the NET:

“Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I _____ that this will turn out for my _____ through your _____ and the help of the _____ of Jesus Christ.”

What will turn out for Paul’s deliverance? _____

How will this turn out for Paul’s deliverance? _____ and _____.

Paul had trained with a prominent Jewish rabbi named Gamaliel. Before Christ captured his heart, Paul was on the fast track to Pharisaical stardom²⁷ (we’ll read his resume in chapter three). Jewish to his bones, he wrote epistles that carry the aroma of the Old Testament Scriptures. Look up the following verses and note anything that echoes Philippians 1:18–26.

Job 13:14–16 – _____

Psalm 34:4–6 – _____

Psalm 35:26–28 – _____

Look at Philippians 1:20. How will Christ be honored in Paul’s body? _____

Why is that (v. 21)? _____

In your own words, what does it mean for Paul to live (v. 22)? _____

What is Paul’s desire (v. 23)? _____

Why (v. 23)? _____

²⁷ Acts 22:3

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 1:12–2:4 aloud.

Now, write out at least five observations from 1:27–2:4: _____

Understand the Text

Moving thoughts from one language to another is rarely a word-for-word equation. If you speak a second (or third) language, you know translating can present challenges. We bump into one of these issues in Philippians 1:27.

The ESV phrases the verse this way:

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

A word-for-word rendering reads like this:

“Only worthy of the gospel of Christ you yourselves be a citizen of.”

Pretty clunky, isn't it?

The word I have translated to “citizens” is *politeuma*, and this word plays a significant role in Paul’s message to the Philippians both here and in chapter three. For a detailed discussion of this word, see the Digging Deeper section at the end of this week’s homework.

Now look at your marked copy of the text. We should see quite a bit of orange highlighting in this section. What signs of unity does Paul hope to hear of before he visits the Philippians again? (vv. 1:27; 2:2) _____

Paul’s words in 1:27–2:4 ring with echoes of Jesus’s teachings. Look up the following verses:

- Matthew 5:10–12
- Matthew 5:43–48
- John 17:20–26

What similarities did you notice? _____

Look again at verses 1:27–28 in your marked text.

Why did Paul want the Philippian believers to live in a manner “worthy of the gospel of Christ?” (v. 27–28) _____

In verse 28, Paul says, “this is a clear sign to them.” What is the sign? _____

The “sign” signifies two things—one for the opponents and one for the believers. What are those two things (v. 28)? _____

Let’s take a moment to look at the word “destruction (v. 28) in Greek:

Apóleia (ἀπόλεια) – the destruction that one experiences, *annihilation* both complete and in process, *ruin*. Especially of eternal destruction as punishment for the wicked.²⁸

Apóleia is a word that Paul uses only to refer to eternal damnation. Based on this, do you think that these opponents are the same people that Paul was talking about in verses 15–17? Why or why not?

Paul’s call for radical transformation in the Philippians’ day-to-day lives drew attention, scorn, and opposition from unbelievers.

Now re-read verse 29.

He tells the Philippians that they have been granted two things. What are those two things?

1. _____

2. _____

Who granted them? _____

Look up the following verses:

- Acts 5:41–42
- Acts 14:21–22

²⁸ Arndt, 127.

- James 1:2–4

Based on these texts, what benefits do believers reap from suffering? _____

Live the Text

Several years ago, my father went through radiation treatment for throat cancer—cancer of the tonsil, specifically.

It was awful.

Every Monday through Friday, he would lie strapped down to a table with his head immobilized, while caregivers burned cancer cells from his body.

After about two weeks of this treatment, the tender tissue of his cheeks, tongue, and throat exploded in mouth ulcers, making even the simple act of swallowing almost unbearable. My family and my parents share meals often, and as we did so, my dad would sit silently, tears trickling from the corner of his eyes from the pain of trying to eat.

After he finished treatment, do you know what he said?

“That cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me.”

He heard from God while trapped on the table. The primary weapon he had in his battle with cancer was prayer, and pray he did. According to him, the intimacy he shared with Jesus made the cancer experience worth it.

That’ll preach.

How have you suffered in the past? _____

How did your suffering shape you? _____

How are you suffering now? _____

How might this suffering benefit you or those around you? _____

Digging Deeper

Greek Keyword Study: *Politeuma* (Πολιτεύομαι)

Philippians 3:20 – But our citizenship (*politeuma*) is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend Ellen understands the concept of homesickness.

Born and raised in the Netherlands (formerly called Holland), she moved to the United States on a work visa twelve years ago. Now the proud holder of a Green Card, she may reside permanently on US soil.

But her citizenship is in the Netherlands. And even though Ellen has a church, a job, and friends, her heart feels the weight of her resident alien status (her words).

When Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi, he was addressing a group of resident aliens. He used a rare Greek word to describe their status: *πολίτευμα* or *politeuma*. The term is a *hapax legomenon*, meaning it appears only once in the New Testament.

Plato, writing around 350 BCE, used *politeuma* to refer to the State, or the ruling governing bodies. The Greek historian Polybius, writing in the second century BCE, used the word to describe a constitution. The author of 2 Maccabees, a Jewish document from the same period, used *politeuma* to denote citizenship.

Why would Paul use such an obscure term for the Philippians but no one else?

Philippi was a Roman colony, which made citizenship a big deal. Simply put, Philippi was Rome-away-from-Rome, and citizens of the city enjoyed the full privileges of Roman heritage. Benefits included self-government and exemption from the heavy taxes placed on land and commerce.²⁹

Romans, regardless of where they lived, participated in imperial divine honors. They believed that their emperors rose to the status of gods or demi-gods upon their deaths, and thus venerated them as such during their lives. In fact, an inscription from Priene dated 9 BCE refers to Caesar August as “Savior” (*sōtēr*).³⁰

But divine honors offered to anyone other than Christ created a problem for the Philippian Christians. Refusal to participate could result in revocation of Roman citizenship. Religious practices went hand-in-hand with all state-sponsored events, festivals, and private gatherings.³¹ Social ostracization typically led to economic hardship. To confess Christ alone as Lord instead of Caesar came at a cost.

²⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Vol. 3*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2014), 2,382.

³⁰ Cohick, 201.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

Paul wrote, in part, to remind the Philippians that their true citizenship, their constitution, their *politeuma*, was not in Rome. The church lived as resident aliens in Philippi, but their true home was in heaven.³² Their true *sōtēr* was Christ.

What does this mean for us?

My friend Ellen calls Denton, Texas “home,” and yet she still feels homesick. Her heart longs to fellowship with people who share her corporate history and the social norms that come with it.

Part of that is because she’s a Dutch citizen.

Part of it is because her true citizenship is in heaven, and her true home is with Christ.

You and I are not supposed to get too comfortable here. We must remember our first allegiance. We belong to Jesus. We live where we live on a heavenly work visa as ambassadors for Christ. As St. Augustine said, “You have made us for yourselves, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”³³

Now What?

More than ten years ago, I sat in a Bible study with a woman who said she was Christ’s ambassador, cleverly disguised as a nurse. Her statement resonated with me. I worked on a country music radio station and longed to move to a Christian setting. Her words reminded me that God places his emissaries on the frontlines—in schools, hospitals, and law firms. Driving buses, scanning groceries, fixing cars.

We reside on earth as Christ’s ambassadors, living as resident aliens in a land not our own, cleverly disguised as everyday people, but sowing gospel-saturated seeds of grace everywhere we go.

Consider your neighborhood, office, gym, and grocery store. What would it look like to approach those spaces as an ambassador?

Verses for Reflection or Memorization:

- Exodus 3:16–17
- Deuteronomy 7:6–9
- Ephesians 4:1
- Colossians 1:9–12
- Hebrews 12:22–25
- 1 Peter 2:9–12
- Revelation 21:1–7

³² Paul used “heaven” to describe the place where God sits on the throne, not the believers’ final resting place. Elsewhere Paul makes clear that the believers in Christ await a bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:53); John the Revelator wrote of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:2).

³³ St. Augustine’s *Confessions* (Lib 1,1–2,2.5,5; CSEL 33, 1–5).

Week Three: Philippians 2:5-30

Week 3—Day 1

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 32:1–2 – Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Israel’s second king, David, who penned this psalm, lived under the Mosaic Law and the Levitical Code. Because God, in his perfection, is perfectly just, he must punish all sin. Because God is also perfectly merciful, he established a system in which the people of Israel and proselytes could enjoy the forgiveness of their sins. The Book of Leviticus details the sacrificial system.

You and I, however, have direct access to the forgiver of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life. He took the just punishment for our failures, mistakes, and rebellious acts when the Roman soldiers nailed him to the cross.

He exchanged our guilt for his perfect record.

Now, when God the Father looks at you, he sees the perfection of his precious Son.

Is there anything you need to confess? Unburden yourself to the Lord: _____

Now receive your grace. God does not forgive begrudgingly. Paul told the Ephesian Christians that God is rich in mercy (Eph 2:4). The Lord doles out grace lavishly, abundantly, exceedingly. Take a moment to thank God for his forgiveness and ask him to bless your time with him.

Talk to God

Week 3—Day 2

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 103:2–5 – Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Use merriam-webster.com to look up the word “benefit.” Write out the definition(s) that you feel best capture the meaning of the psalmist’s usage. _____

Does it make you feel uncomfortable to think about benefitting from God? I have wrestled with that notion. But the psalmist—inspired by the Holy Spirit—wants all to know that those who enter into a relationship with the God of the universe reap endless benefits.

List the five benefits the psalmist mentions: _____

We enjoy some of these benefits now, like forgiveness, redemption, love, mercy, and satisfaction. And sometimes, God provides healing from injury and illness on earth. But even when he doesn’t, we know one day he will raise us in perfect, immortal bodies that will never see decay.

Talk to God

Before you start the homework, thank the Lord for the blessings he’s given you.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians chapter two in your Bible or the printed text in the back of your workbook. Do you see any words, sentences, or verses that reference the themes of this letter? If so, highlight them accordingly:

- Unity – orange
- Friendship – green
- Joy – yellow

What stood out to you? _____

What questions do you have? _____

Understand the Text

Reread Philippians 2:2–5 in the text below. Circle the word “mind.”

Philippians 2:2–5 – Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

The Greek word behind “mind” in this passage is *phroneó* (φρονέω). *Phroneó* means “to think,” “form/hold an opinion,” or “judge.” If you use the NASB, NET, NIV, or NLT, you’ll notice that the translators chose synonyms for the word “mind.” In English, we call such variety good writing. But when we see repetition of the same word in the Greek text, we need to take notice. For a more on *phroneó*, see the Digging Deeper section at the end of this week’s homework.

Reread Philippians 2:2–8. When Paul tells readers to “have this mind” among them, what does he mean?

Because of how Paul structured his sentences, having “this mind” could refer to verse 2 and mean “having the same love and being in full accord,” or it could refer to verses 6–11. Regardless of Paul’s intent, he desires both sentiments for us.

Let’s take a closer look at 2:5–11. Scholars believe Paul borrowed these poetic lines from an old hymn and have thus dubbed this section “the Christ Hymn.”

Using the text in the back of your workbook, fill in the blanks.

Christ was in the _____ of God (v. 6a).

What do you think this means? _____

What did Jesus refrain from grasping (v. 6b)? _____

What are the implications of that? _____

Reread your answer to 2:6b. What did Jesus do instead (v. 7a)? _____

How did he do this (v. 7b, c)? _____

What do you think that means? _____

What did Jesus do by sharing in human nature (v. 8a)? _____

How did he do this (v. 8b, c)? _____

Summarize 2:5–8 in your own words: _____

In verse 9, most English translations start with the word “therefore.” Anytime we see “therefore,” we must ask, “What is the therefore there for?”

“Therefore” is a logical inferential conjunction that connects the clause behind it to the clause ahead of it, moving the argument forward. So in the case of Philippians 2:9, we could also translate the verse this way:

Philippians 2:9 – Because of this, God has highly exalted him...

Now let’s ask, “What is the ‘therefore’ there for?” In other words, because of what? _____

Because of Christ’s actions, God did two things. What are they (v. 9)? _____

Why did God do those two things (vv. 10–11)? _____

Why did Jesus agree to doing what he did? Look up the following verses and write your answer in the space below:

- John 4:34
- John 12:47
- John 14:3
- Hebrews 12:2

Live the Text

In Christian circles, we often speak about how Christ died for our sins. We spill less ink on how Jesus lived for us. Philippians 2:5–8 gives us the briefest overview, but a quick skim of Leviticus 11–27 paints a vivid, detailed picture of the Jewish requirements for daily life and worship.

Because most of us will never see a crucifixion, we sit comfortably removed from its brutality. Jesus didn't just die; he was tortured. Stripped. Punched. Spat on. Flogged. Nailed down. Lifted up. Left to hang.

The question we must ask ourselves today and every day is, "How shall I live in light of this?" Briefly consider the following questions.

The Most High King made himself a slave for me. How shall I live in light of this? _____

The One with the most fame became a no-name. How shall I live in light of this? _____

The author of strength became weak. How shall I live in light of this? _____

The One who possessed everything made himself poor. How shall I live in light of this? _____

The One without limits limited himself to time, space, and a body of flesh so that I could spend eternity with him in a perfect, glorified, eternal body. How shall I live in light of this? _____

Week 3—Day 3

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 103:11–12 – For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Use merriam-webster.com to define “steadfast.” Write out the definition of 1b: _____

Use merriam-webster.com to define “transgression”: _____

How high are the heavens above the earth? _____

How far is the east from the west? _____

David, the psalmist, uses metaphors to describe the LORD’s incredible love for all—love that cannot be measured. Neither can the forgiveness he extends to you. While our past mistakes have a way of poking their noses into our present, they have no bearing on our future.

Talk to God

Spend a few minutes praising the Lord. Thank him for loving you with an everlasting, unchanging, immovable love. Ask him to help you focus today as we dive into his word.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 2:5–30 in the text provided in your workbook or your Bible and mark it in the following way:

- Blue circle – all logical relationships reflected in the language, like *so that, therefore, in order to, because, for, since, or for this reason*.
- Purple underline – all temporal (time) relationships, like *now, immediately, before, after, or the next day*.
- Brown underline – contrasts and correlations such as *either-or, whether-or, if-then, both-and, but, and however*.

Did anything strike you? Do you have any questions? List them here: _____

Understand the Text

Reread Philippians 1:27. What does Paul encourage the Philippians to do? _____

In Chapter 2, Paul tells us what a life worthy of the gospel looks like. In verses 5–11 he points to Christ as a model. In 2:12–18, Paul continues to illustrate the gospel-worthy life.

What have the believers always done in Paul’s presence? (v. 12a) _____

What does Paul want them to do in his absence? (v. 12a) _____

Fill in the blanks to describe what this looks like:

“Work out your own _____ with _____
and _____.”

Read the following verses:

John 5:24 – Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Romans 10:9–10 – Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Ephesians 2:8–9 – ^{For} by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Briefly summarize how we are saved from sin to eternal life: _____

On Week 1—Day 3 of your homework, we discussed Christian sainthood. You assumed the title of “saint” when you believed in Christ Jesus to save you from your sins and for eternal life. Flip back to page 27 and write out the three components to sainthood mentioned there:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The three components of sainthood are the three phases of salvation. Based on the verses you looked up, which phase of salvation do you suppose Paul is referencing when he tells the Philippians to work out their own salvation? _____

Now let’s look at Philippians 2:13 in a few different translations.

Type <https://biblehub.com/philippians/2-13.htm> in your web search bar.

Write out 2:13 in the following versions:

NIV: _____

NLT: _____

What does this verse tell you about the sanctification process? _____

Reread Philippians 2:14–18 and answer the following questions:

What does Paul want the believers to do? (v. 14) _____

Why? (v. 15) _____

What words does Paul use to describe one's generation or society? _____

How does Paul want Christians to stand out? _____

Where do you think Paul got this idea? Look at Matthew 5:14–16 for a clue: _____

Per Matthew 5:16, what does this accomplish? _____

How are the believers to do this? (Phil 2:16a) _____



In 2:17, Paul uses imagery that would have been familiar to Gentiles and Jews alike. The Greco-Roman world incorporated religious activities (such as sacrifices and offerings) into almost every aspect of public and private life. In verse 17, however, he alluded to the Jewish sacrificial system. In ancient Israel, wine symbolized joy. When the priest poured wine on the altar of a burning sacrifice, the flames would shoot up as though emphasizing the worship.³⁴

What attitude we should have when serving Christ and others? _____

³⁴ Astorga, 84.

Live the Text

Glance back over the list of things Paul encourages believers to do so we can shine in a steadily darkening world (v. 12–16)

What areas do you struggle with most? _____

Paul’s answer to our difficulty with obedience lies in verse 16—we are to “hold fast to the word of life.” What is one thing you can start regularly doing to get more of God’s word in your heart? Here are some options.

- Read the Bible
- Listen to the Bible
- Verse of the Day option on Bible app
- Listen to Christian radio
- Listen to sermons on podcasts
- Grab a friend and help each other memorize Scripture

Any other ideas? Get creative and have fun! _____

Week 3—Day 4

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 103:13–14 – As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Use merriam-webster.com to define “compassion”: _____

Notice the two components to compassion. It starts with awareness, but it doesn’t stop there. What is the second component, in your own words? _____

“Compassion” finds its root in the Latin word “compati.” While English lists “compassion” as a noun, the Latin definition describes an action.

“*Compati*” means to “enter in and suffer with.”

Re-read Psalm 103:13–14. What new meaning does this take on in light of our fresh understanding of compassion as both a noun and verb? _____

How does this point to Jesus? _____

Talk to God

Regardless of what you did yesterday or today, your Heavenly Father meets you with compassion. He sent his Son to enter into creation—not only to suffer with you but to suffer for you. Give the Lord all of your prayers and concerns and ask him to help you focus on and absorb his word. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 2:5–30 and then record at least five observations. _____

Understand the Text

Reread 2:19–24 and put an X over any reference to Jesus, including “Lord Jesus,” “Jesus Christ,” and “Lord.”

What does Paul hope to do soon? _____

In whom is his hope placed? _____

Why does Paul hope to send Timothy? _____

Let’s review where we are by looking at this week’s reading differently. We’ll back up to our primary directive that we read in 1:27—to live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel.

1:27 – Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel (as a citizen of heaven)

What does heavenly citizenship look like?

2:5 – Be likeminded in Christ

2:6–11 – Example 1: Christ’s perfect humility

2:12–13 – God empowers godly living

2:14–16 – Directions for godly living

2:17–18 – Rejoicing in godly living

2:19–24 – Example 2: Timothy

What qualities does Timothy display that make him a godly example?

V. 20 – _____

V. 22 – _____

How does Paul contrast Timothy with the “others?” (v. 21) _____

Therefore, what does Paul hope to do? (v. 23) _____

When does Paul hope to do this? (v. 23) _____

What was Paul’s situation? (see Acts 25:12) _____

What is Paul confident will happen? (v. 24) _____

Where is Paul’s confidence placed? (v. 24) _____

Live the Text

Timothy was more than Paul’s protégé; he was like a son to him, as well as a cherished friend. You have now read the book of Philippians three times and combed through chapters one and two meticulously. What does it look like to be a Timothy kind of friend? _____

Ask the Lord if someone in your circle of influence needs a Timothy today.

Does anyone come to mind? _____

What can you do today to encourage this person? _____

Week 3—Day 5

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 34:22 – The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Use merriam-webster.com to define “redeem.” Read all six explanations and summarize them here:

God has redeemed your life. What does this mean? _____

Now use merriam-webster.com to define “condemn”:

Read Romans 8:1–4 in the New Living Translation:

Romans 8:1–4 – So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. ² And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. ³ The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body, God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. ⁴ He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

Talk to God

We can say with the psalmist, “Bless the Lord, O my soul” (Ps 103:1–2)! He removes the condemnation we deserve and redeems our lives in exchange for our faith. Take a few moments to lift up your prayer requests and praise. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 2:5–2:30 aloud.

Now, write out at least five observations from 2:5–2:30: _____

Understand the Text

Let's take another look at Philippians 2 in outline form.

1:27 – Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel (as a citizen of heaven)

What does heavenly citizenship look like?

2:5 – Be likeminded in Christ

2:6–11 – **Example 1:** Christ's perfect humility

2:12–13 – God empowers godly living

2:14–16 – Directions for godly living

2:17–18 – Rejoicing in godly living

2:19–24 – **Example 2:** Timothy

2:25–30 – **Example 3:** Epaphroditus

Paul used a Philippian Christian named Epaphroditus as his third example for godly living. Everything we know about Epaphroditus comes from Paul's letter; Epaphroditus appears only here and possibly in Paul's letter to Philemon.

Paul describes Epaphroditus five ways:

“For he is my _____, _____, and
_____, _____, and your

_____ and _____”
to me in my need.”

Why did Epaphroditus go to Paul in the first place? (Skip ahead to 4:18) _____

Why did Paul send him back? (v. 26) _____

Why was Epaphroditus distressed? (v. 26) _____

How did God intervene? (v. 27) _____

What was the result of God’s intervention for Epaphroditus? (v. 27) _____

For Paul? (v. 27) _____

What two reasons does Paul give for being all the more eager to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi (v. 28)?

1. _____
2. _____

How does Paul want the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus? _____

Why? _____



During Paul’s imprisonment, the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to him with a financial gift. According to Anglican bishop N. T. Wright, “Prisoners in the ancient world received no food from the local authorities.”³⁵ Therefore, those in jail or under house arrest lived on the charity of their friends and relatives. That the church in Philippi chose Epaphroditus as their delegate spoke to his character.

Consider the lengths to which Paul seems to go to convince the Philippian believers to receive Epaphroditus joyfully.

Paul thought it *necessary* to send Epaphroditus back (v. 25).

Paul reiterated Epaphroditus’s value (v. 25).

- Brother
- Fellow worker
- Fellow soldier
- Your messenger
- My minister

³⁵ N. T. Wright and M. F. Bird, “Philippians” in *The New Testament in its World* (London: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 435.

Paul reiterated his illness (vv. 20, 27).

- He was ill
- Indeed ill, near-death
- Almost died

God had to intervene (v. 27).

Receive him with joy (vv. 28, 29).

Epaphroditus risked his life to complete what the Philippians lacked in service (v. 30).

Remember that culture in the first century C.E. was honor/shame driven. Why might Paul have felt compelled to spend so much time urging a warm reception for Epaphroditus? _____

Live the Text

During my elementary school years, I had the dad who coached all of my teams—softball, soccer, and basketball. In his youth, my dad was a great athlete. Alas, I failed to inherit those skills. I scored all of two baskets in my three-year hoops career, and one was for the opposing team.

Sadly, I loathed practice. I preferred to curl up on my bed with a book over running drills and shooting free throws.

“Rebecca,” my dad would say, “you’ve got to get out of your comfort zone. Great things don’t happen in comfort zones.”

While the words went in one ear and out the other back then, I think of them often, now.

God calls us to great things.

Great things don’t happen in comfort zones.

The call to follow Christ will lead away from comfort and into the unknown. Forging new relationships. Foregoing luxuries. Forgiving egregious wrongs from unrepentant offenders.

Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus gave up the familiar to follow their Savior.

Is God calling you to discomfort? Is he asking you to give up something? What would it look like for you to take one step of faith today?

Digging Deeper

Greek Keyword Study: *Phroneó* (Φρονέω)

Philippians 2:2 – Complete my joy by being of the same mind (*phronēte*), having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind (*phronountes*).

Humans think two kinds of thoughts: those that occur to us, like “I’m hungry,” or “That hurt!” and those we choose to dwell on. For instance, I could dwell all day on my grandmother’s warm apple pie—buttery, flakey crust enveloping tart Granny Smith apples, sweetened with cinnamon and sugar, and baked to golden perfection.

Many times when we read the word “think” in Scripture, we are seeing an English translation of the Greek word *phroneó* (φρονέω).

We find *phroneó* in writings dating back to the eighth century B.C.E. with a range of meanings. Homer used it to convey “to think well of,” “to be pleased with,” and “to think of.”³⁶ Isocrates, an ancient Greek rhetorician, used *phroneó* to mean “to aspire” and “to feel contempt.”³⁷ In the Greek translations of the Old Testament (also known as the *Septuagint*), *phroneó* carried the sense of thinking, considering, understanding, and setting one’s mind on something.

Out of the twenty-six times *phroneó* appears in the New Testament, twenty-three come from Paul’s pen. He used the word ten times in the letter to the Philippians, translated most often to “setting one’s mind on,” “having the same mind,” and “to think toward.”

Paul wanted to illustrate a simple concept: We can control the direction of our thoughts.

In other words, Paul used *phroneó* to describe intentional thoughts that lead to deliberate actions. He encouraged the believers to align their thoughts to the will of Christ so they could be united together as the body of Christ, impacting the world for his glory.

What does this mean for us?

One of my children faced developmental delays as a toddler. For a time, my husband and I wondered how the delay would affect them in the future. One day, I allowed myself to imagine a worst-case scenario. As I pictured the scene, knots formed in my stomach, and my heart raced.

Suddenly, a familiar Bible verse sprang to mind: “Set your minds (*phroneó*) on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:2).

A friend of mine says we become what we behold. By ruminating on frightening situations that *might* happen, I grew fearful and anxious. When I remembered that God, in his sovereignty, chose Mike and me as our child’s parents, I received his peace, because God equips us to handle the trials that come our way.

God cares deeply about our thought-life, because our thoughts form our actions. Paul wrote, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds (*phroneó*) on the things of the flesh, but those who live

³⁶ Homer, *Odyssey*, 7.75; Homer, *Iliad*, 6.79; 17.286.

³⁷ Isocrates, *To Philip*, 5.124.

according to the Spirit set their minds (*phroneó*) on the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5). The reverse is also true: Those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit live according to the Spirit.

Now What?

The psalmist wrote, “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” (Ps 90:14). The Jewish day starts in the evening and ends at dawn, so the psalmist might have used morning to refer to youth. But we know this much is true: When we seek the Lord in the morning, we are better equipped to navigate the day in a manner that pleases him. Paul encouraged the Philippians to have the mind of Christ (v. 2:5). We take on such a mind by reading Scripture, praying throughout the day, and serving others. We can’t stop thoughts from popping into our minds, but we do get to decide which ones stay—those which we *phroneó*. By reading, memorizing, and living out the Scriptures, we can have the mind of Christ.

Verses for Reflection or Memorization:

- Matthew 16:23
- Romans 5:15
- Romans 12:3
- 2 Corinthians 13:11
- Philippians 2:2
- Colossians 3:2

Week Four: Philippians 3: 1-4: 1

Week 4—Day 1

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 50:1-2 – The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Circle the verbs (action words) in these verses. What three things does God do? _____

Underline the adjectives. How does the psalmist describe God? _____

What action does God take to summon the earth? _____

How did God create the heavens and the earth? (Gen 1:3) _____

When we set aside time each day to read (or hear) the Bible, we take in the very words of God. The God who spoke order into the chaos over creation, who spoke order over the winds and the waves (Matt 8:23-27) is the same God who can speak order into the chaos of our lives.

What situation/s do you need God to speak into today? _____

Talk to God

God loves to hear from his children. Ask him to speak to you through our study today, and thank him for hearing your prayers.

Week 4—Day 2

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 73:22–24 – I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward, you will receive me to glory.

What three ways did the psalmist act toward God? _____

What three ways did God respond? _____

Romans 5:8 holds the key to the scandalous nature of the gospel:

Romans 5:8 – But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God does not wait for us to get our act together—he pursues while we are in the throes of rebellion.

In what ways have you rebelled against God lately? _____

And according to the psalmist, how has God responded? _____

Who holds whose hand? _____

Your relationship with your Savior does not depend on the strength of your grip. God has you in his hand. Not the other way around.

Talk to God

Do you need to repent of anything? Take a moment to write your words to God. Then give thanks for his strong grip on your life.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 3:1–4:1 in your Bible or the printed text in the back of your workbook. Do you see any words, sentences, or verses that reference the themes of Philippians? If so, highlight them accordingly:

- Unity – orange
- Friendship – green
- Joy – yellow

What stood out to you? _____

What questions do you have? _____

Understand the Text

Reread Philippians 3:1–3.

Paul begins this section with another call to “rejoice,” adding that (even though he is in jail) it is no trouble for him to write these same things. Skim through your marked copy of the text. How many times has Paul referenced “joy” or “rejoicing” up to this point? _____

Does this next statement strike you as curious?

Philippians 3:1b – To write the same things to you is no trouble to me *and is safe for you*.³⁸

³⁸ Emphasis mine.

Allow me to paraphrase Philippians 3:1–3:

Finally, sisters and brothers, I want you to rejoice in the promises and the future and the fellowship we have in the Lord. I don't mind writing this to you over and over. In fact, it serves as a safeguard for you.

So, what does Paul mean? How does joy keep his readers safe? Let's look at the Greek word behind "safeguard" or "safe."

Asphalés (ἀσφαλής) – stable, firm; a sure foundation. To express certainty about something. Pertaining to being in someone's best interest. Safe; secure.³⁹

Asphalés is a compound word. The first component is the negating particle "a." We use this rule of grammar in English, too. When we describe something as "typical," we mean the object is of a particular type.

A typical summer day in Texas feels like a campfire in a sauna.

To characterize something as "atypical" means the opposite—it's unusual for its type.

By four o'clock in the afternoon, the temperature dipped to sixty-eight degrees—atypical for a summer day in Texas.

The "a" works as a negating suffix on a word the same way in Greek as in English. The second component of *asphalés* is *sphallo*, which means "to cause to fall, to throw down [by tripping up]."⁴⁰ The Greek historian Thucydides, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, used *asphalés* to mean "protection from falling' on treacherous ground."⁴¹

In light of this information, what do you think Paul means when he says joy is a safeguard to the Philippian Christians? _____

Now, reread Philippians 3:2–3 and review 1:15–17 and 1:28.

Scholars differ about how many groups of opponents Paul describes in his letter, but I propose three.

Group 1: Christians preaching and serving from selfish motives (1:15–17).

Group 2: Citizens of Philippi who practice imperial cult worship and resist Christianity (1:28).

Group 3: Jewish Christians imposing the Mosaic Law on Gentile Christians (3:2).

The third group consisted of Jews who had believed that Jesus was their expected Messiah. They consented that Jesus gave his life on their behalf, rose from the dead, and would come again to establish his kingdom on earth permanently. They just couldn't give up the Jewish code. And beyond that, they

³⁹ Arndt, 147.

⁴⁰ Silva, 432.

⁴¹ Ibid, 432.

wanted non-Jewish men and women coming to the faith to practice Jewish dietary rules and circumcision. But Paul had some things to say about that.

Look up the following verses:

- Galatians 2:4; 11–16
- Colossians 2:11–12
- Deuteronomy 30:6

How did Paul handle the situation in Galatia when Peter pulled away from the Gentiles to eat with the Jews? (Gal 2:11) _____

How are believers justified before Christ? (Gal 2:15) _____

What is the “real circumcision”? _____

Circumcision in the Bible dates back to Abraham. Read Genesis 17:1–14 in the text below. Circle every occurrence of “offspring” and underline every occurrence of “covenant.”

Genesis 17:1 –14 – When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³ both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

How many times did you circle “offspring?” _____

How many times did you underline “covenant?” _____

Moses, the author of Genesis, wants to make sure readers understand—God wrote the covenant of “sonship” on the very body part used to co-create a son or daughter. The God who asks for first fruits (Pro 3:9) marks the organ that brings forth the fruit of a man and a woman.

Jesus has established a new covenant. This covenant consists not of sons and daughters, but sisters and brothers in Christ. God still calls his people to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28), but now we carry out that blessing through disciple-making (Matt 28:19).

When we turn away from sin to follow our Savior, a new cutting away occurs—a permanent mark on the heart that marks Jesus’s followers as forever his.

Live the Text

Consider circumcision. Are there areas in your life that Christ needs to cut away? He loves you and moves toward you with compassion. Tell the Lord what you need: _____

Consider joy. What if, instead of looking at joy as something to feel, we addressed it as something to practice? God takes our joy seriously, as we’ll see in the Digging Deeper section at the end of this week’s homework. What are three things you could do today to practice joy?

Week 4—Day 3

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 85:8 – Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

God reveals himself to us in two ways: general revelation and specific revelation.

General revelation includes the existence of the universe, the diversity in nature, and the complexity of the human body and conscience.

Specific revelation refers to God’s intervention in human history through his people, the prophets, Christ Jesus, and the Scriptures.

And while the universe points to his glory, Jesus and his written word reveal his heart.

This psalm shows us that not only will the LORD speak, but that he will speak peace to his people.

Over what issues do you need God to speak peace today? _____

The psalmist also notes that, in order for the LORD to speak to his people, we have to take a certain posture. Fill in the blank:

“Let me _____ what the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them _____ to folly.”

What is the first thing someone must do to receive God’s peace? _____

What is the second thing? _____

Use merriam-webster.com to define “folly”: _____

Talk to God

In what pockets of your life are you most vulnerable? Where are you most likely to “turn back to folly?” Ask the Lord for strength in these areas. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 3:1–4:1 in the text provided in your workbook or your Bible and mark it in the following way:

- Blue circle – all logical relationships reflected in the language, like *so that, therefore, in order to, because, for, since, or for this reason*.
- Purple underline – all temporal (time) relationships, like *now, immediately, before, after, or the next day*.
- Brown underline – contrasts and correlations such as *either-or, whether-or, if-then, both-and, but, although* and *however*.

Did anything strike you? Do you have any questions? List them here: _____

Understand the Text

Reread Philippians 3:2–11.

Yesterday we discussed the Judaizers—the ones whom Paul describes as dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh. The Judaizers also called themselves “the circumcision”—a point that Paul protests.

Who is the true circumcision group (v. 3)? _____

Foreskin removal marked the Jews. What distinguishes the “true circumcision” group (v.3)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Based on your reading, what do you think Paul means by “confidence in the flesh” or “confidence in human credentials?” _____

What seven things does Paul list that could cause him to be “confident in the flesh/human credentials?”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Paul has presented a resume that would make any orthodox Jew jealous. Not only did he come with an impressive pedigree, but he also trained with the Harvard chancellor of rabbis. Paul held a long list of accomplishments. He looked forward to an enviable career. But all of that changed on the road to Damascus.

Read Acts 26:1–18.

Describe what Paul saw (v.13): _____

Read Psalm 104:2. How does the psalmist describe the LORD? _____

Glance back over your list of seven things Paul could boast over. How does he count or consider those things after knowing Christ (Phil 3:7)? _____

Why does Paul count/consider them this way (v. 7)? _____

What logical inference can you make from what Paul says? In other words, what can accomplishments and success stories prohibit us from? _____

Why do you think this is the case? _____

4. (v. 10) _____
5. (v. 10) _____
6. (v. 10) _____
7. (v. 10) _____
8. (v. 11) _____

Live the Text

We need to understand that God does not hate our accomplishments. In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he wrote that God had prepared (in advance) good works for his readers to walk in (2:10). In other words, part of walking out our faith means doing good works and accomplishing good things. But as we saw in chapter one, God looks at our motives.

Think back on Paul’s resume. The authors of the Old Testament commended everything on his list. Paul was a Hebrew-speaking Israelite who could trace his lineage back to the tribe that produced Israel’s first king. He kept the Law—the Law God gave to Israel—flawlessly and stood blameless before the Lord.⁴⁵

So, what’s wrong with this picture?

Paul’s motives were wrong. He was zealous for the Law, not the Lord of the Law. He found his security, identity, and worth in the Jewish system, not the God of the system. And God is a jealous God.

Not *of* us.

For us.

What are the things in life you are most proud of? When you introduce yourself to other people, what do you want them to know about you? _____

Would Paul call the things you listed in and of themselves *skubalon*? Not necessarily. But he would tell you that, in comparison to Christ, any accomplishments pale compared to knowing him.

⁴⁵ Paul persecuted and murdered Christians, a point that must be included in the discussion, although with context. Paul believed that he was persecuting Jews (who followed Jesus) who were blaspheming the name of the Lord. Leviticus 24:16 states, “Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.” In this way, Paul believed he was obeying God.

Week 4—Day 4

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 86:11–13 – Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of Sheol.

Why does the psalmist ask the LORD to teach him his way? _____

Let's turn this around. If we are going to walk in God's truth (which is *the* truth), what do we need the LORD to do? _____

Turn to Psalm 18:30. How does the psalmist describe God's way? _____

God's "way" is also described as his law, testimony, precepts, commandments, commands, decrees, statutes, rules, and judgements. Read Psalm 19:7–11 and list the way the author describes God's way and the benefits of following it:

1. (v. 7) _____
2. (v. 7) _____
3. (v. 8) _____
4. (v. 8) _____
5. (v. 9) _____
6. (v. 9) _____
7. (v. 10) _____
8. (v. 10) _____

Talk to God

When it comes to following God's way, where are your stumbling blocks? Take a minute to lift them up in written prayer to the God whose steadfast love toward you is great.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 3:1–4:1 and record at least five observations. _____

Understand the Text

Reread verses 3:8–16.

Now let's structure the text to see if we can better grasp the flow of Paul's argument.

3:1 – Rejoice in the Lord!

3:2 – Beware of the evildoers.

3:3–6 – Paul's past (achievements)

3:7–11 – Paul's present (striving to know Christ more)

3:12–16 – Paul's future (press on toward the goal)

Paul says he has not “already obtained this” (v. 12) What has he not yet obtained? _____

The NET phrases 3:12 this way:

Philippians 3:12 – Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me.

Let's look at the Greek behind “been perfected (*teteleiōmai*)” and “strive (*diōkō*).”

Teteleiōmai (τετελείωμαι) – to achieve the final state of something; to be completed, fulfilled, perfected. The consummating conclusion of a dynamic process, the goal of which manifests the realization of its meaning and its intentions.⁴⁶

Diōkō (διώκω) – to move rapidly and decisively toward an objective; hasten, run, press on.⁴⁷ Pursue as in a hunt. Used in *Homer* and the Septuagint primarily of military pursuit.⁴⁸

Reread 3:12. What do you think Paul was striving to lay hold of? _____

What do you think Jesus had laid hold of for Paul? _____

Paraphrase 3:12 in your own words: _____

Reread 3:13–14 in the NET:

Philippians 3:13–14 – Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead, I am single-minded. Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out (*epekteinómai*) for the things that are ahead,¹⁴ with this goal in my mind, I strive (*diōkō*) toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What do you think Paul meant by “forgetting the things that are behind?” See Acts 26:9–11 and Philippians 3:5–6 for clarity. _____

We see the word *diōkō* again in verse 14, but we see another Greek word worth examining before that.

Epekteinómai (ἐπεκτείνωμαι) – to exert oneself to the uttermost, stretch out, strain.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Silva, 479.

⁴⁷ Arndt, 254.

⁴⁸ Silva, 750.

⁴⁹ Arndt, 361.

Paul uses athletic imagery with *epekteinómai*, “picturing himself as a runner whose every muscle and nerve is singularly focused on the goal, in hopes of winning the prize.”⁵⁰

What is the prize Paul is straining toward? _____

What do you think Paul means by “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus?” _____

Philippians 3:15–16 – Therefore, let those of us who are “perfect (*teleios*)” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.

Notice that when Paul describes himself as among the “perfect,” he uses the adjectival form of the verb *teteleiōmai*.

Go to biblehub.com/philippians/3-15.htm to see how the NIV, NLT, and ESV translate verse 15.

What did you notice? _____

At first blush, Paul seems to be contradicting himself. In verse 12, he says he has not already “been perfected.” Just three verses later, he says, “Let those of us who are perfect...” Again in verse 15, he wrote, “Not that I have already attained it,” and in 3:16, he says, “Let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.”

In your opinion, how should we reconcile these alleged contradictions? _____

Admittedly, the section we are studying today presents several challenges. Hang in there. It’s okay to dwell in the “I don’t know” for a couple of days. We will address all of these issues in the next lecture. In the meantime, press on! You’re doing great.

⁵⁰ Fee, 346.

Week 4—Day 5

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 112:1 – Praise the LORD! Blessed is the [one] who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments!

Use merriam-webster.com to define “blessed”: _____

Use merriam-webster.com to define “delight” in its verbal form: _____

To “fear the LORD” means to revere him, to behold him with awe. In some cases, however, it does mean “to be afraid.” For instance, I feel fear when I think of removing myself from his will—not because I believe he will pour out his wrath on me—he has already poured out his anger on Christ. But because I love him so much, and when we love someone, we don’t want to jeopardize our intimacy with that person.

Note the circular pattern here: when we hold God in reverence and awe, when we delight in following Christ, God delights to bless us and fill us with delight (see Ps 37:4).

Do you find it challenging to delight in the Lord or his commandments? It’s okay if you do. I believe that God loves it when we pray like this:

God, I don’t fear you, but I want to. I don’t delight in you, but I want to. I don’t love you with my whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, but I want to. Please help me to love you with my entire being.

Talk to God

If you delight in the LORD, tell him why. If not, don’t worry about it. He already knows. And he also wants to fill you with the joy that comes from a deep, intimate relationship with him. Take a moment to tell him what’s on your heart. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 3:1–4:1 out loud.

Now, write out at least five observations from 3:17–4:1: _____

Understand the Text

Let's take a step back and look at what we've studied so far.

1:27 – Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel (as a citizen of heaven)

What does heavenly citizenship look like?

2:5 – Be likeminded in Christ

2:6–11 – **Example 1:** Christ's perfect humility

2:12–13 – God empowers godly living

2:14–16 – Directions for godly living

2:17–18 – Rejoicing in godly living

2:19–24 – **Example 2:** Timothy

2:25–30 – **Example 3:** Epaphroditus

3:1 – Rejoice in the Lord!

3:2 – Beware of the evildoers.

3:3–6 – Paul's past (achievements)

3:7–11 – Paul's present (striving to know Christ more)

3:12–16 – Paul's future (press on toward the goal)

3:17–4:1 – **Example 4:** Paul

Based on the way we've organized the text here, what is the main thing Paul wants the Philippians to do? (1:27) _____

How does he want the believers to do that? (3:17) _____

“Imitation” can be a dirty word in an individualistic society where people “discover our own truth,” “find our own way,” and “blaze our own trail.” However, God has designed us to imitate.

Babies begin to imitate sounds and expressions between four and eight months of age.⁵² By the time they turn three, toddlers are likely pushing around toy mowers or getting into mother’s makeup. It was right around fifth grade when both of my kids suddenly *had* to have the latest sneakers or blue jeans.

Adults do this, too. I’ve seen pastors imitate other pastors and women pick up the lingo of their favorite authors and influencers. Our family attended a church for a short period of time where all the men seemed like carbon copies of the lead pastor, right down to his voice inflections and mannerisms.

Even the most introverted among us must consent to this truth: we are pack-people, made for community, and the way we belong is by imitation.

Paul knew this, too. Look up the following verses and answer the questions:

- 1 Corinthians 4:16–17

Who does Paul tell the Corinthians to imitate? _____

How does he expect them to imitate him? _____

- 1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1

Who does Paul tell the Corinthians to imitate? _____

What does this look like? (10:31 –33) _____

Paul reminds the Philippians that their citizenship “is in heaven.” Think for a moment about citizenship. What are some benefits a citizen of your country of birth enjoys? _____

Look at Ephesians 1:1–14 and list a few of the benefits followers of Christ receive as citizens of heaven:

⁵² Mary L. Gavin, M.D., “Communication and Your 4 –7 Month-Old,” in *KidsHealth from Nemours* (Date not available), accessed on July 19, 2021. <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/c47m.html>

Live the Text

As a child growing up, I moved with my family about every three years.

We lived (in the following order) in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Minnesota. Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, and Minnesota (again).

Yes. We enjoyed a total of nine quality years in Minnesota.

If you've spent any time in the north, you'll notice a few things. The accent, for one. Minnesotans also use terms that differ from some used in other regions. Want a soda? Ask the restaurant what kind of pop they offer. Has a friend lost a loved one? You don't bring a meal; you cook up a hotdish. Want something to do on Friday nights? Learn to love hockey.

Minnesota is a far cry from the south. There, if you address a group of people, you say, "y'all." Friday nights are for football, and Sunday afternoons are for fried chicken and family. People wear wranglers, and not just when they go country dancing.

We all conform to our surroundings to one degree or another, whether we like it or not.

Where have you lived the longest? _____

What are some traits of that area that you picked up? _____

As Christians, we bear the traits of heaven wherever we go. Do you have a godly person in your life that you admire? If yes, who is it? _____

What about that person is imitation-worthy? _____

What are some things you can do today to reflect your heavenly citizenship? _____

Digging Deeper

Greek Keyword Study: *Chairō* (Χαίρω)

Philippians 3:1 – Finally, my brothers [and sisters], rejoice (*chairete*) in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

A congregation belting out hymns. Fresh coffee and warm cinnamon rolls. A hearty laugh with a good friend. All these images come to mind when I imagine joy.

Joy winds its way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, appearing as a verb (χαίρω or *chairō*) or a noun (χαρά or *chara*) two hundred thirty-four times.⁵³

When you combine the word “joy” with all its synonyms, theologian Jon Bloom says that God’s command to rejoice or be glad appears more than any other rule or regulation in the Bible.⁵⁴

God takes joy—our joy—seriously.

Paul, who used the word *chara* more than any other author in Scripture, described joy as the bedrock on which the kingdom of heaven sits: “For the kingdom of Heaven is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy (*chara*) in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

Sometimes joy comes easily. Other times, it feels elusive. So how are we to rejoice when our hearts and minds resist?

We remember that joy goes beyond our emotions. Joy is a feeling, but it goes beyond happiness. Shortly before the synagogue leaders arrested Jesus, he told his disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that *my joy may be in you*, and that *your joy may be full*”⁵⁵ (Jn 15:9–11).

What Does This Mean for Us?

When we abide (or rest) in Jesus, Jesus provides our joy—and not just a little mood-boost to tide us over. Jesus wants our joy-tanks full. Paul wrote something similar to the Galatian Christians: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22–23).

If joy is a fruit of the Spirit, consider the laws of nature. A tree never strives or strains to make apples or pears or tangerines; it simply produces its fruit as it pulls nourishment from the ground through its roots. In much the same way, as believers keep Christ at the center of our lives, his Holy Spirit produces joy in our hearts.

Now What?

We’ve heard health experts say, “You are what you eat.” My track coach used to tell us, “Garbage in, garbage out.” From a spiritual standpoint, we find the same principle at work. If we spend our days

⁵³ The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and translated to Greek in the second century B.C.E.

⁵⁴ Jon Bloom, “The Most Repeated Command in the Bible,” on *Desiring God* (November 21, 2017), accessed on June 30, 2021. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-most-repeated-command-in-the-bible>.

⁵⁵ Emphasis mine.

binging Netflix, combing through social media, and watching angry people interrupt each other on the news, we can expect to struggle with frustration and anxiety.

Paul offers a better way: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:1–3).

We also remember that the God who commands his people to rejoice and be glad is the God who gives us space to lament—who tells his people there is “a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance” (Ecc 3:4). The apostles James, Peter, and Paul each wrote of finding joy in their sufferings, because it’s the valleys in life—the losses, the heartaches, the deaths—that remind us that our joy is not rooted in the here-and-now.

Our joy roots itself in the there-and-then—in the new heaven and earth, where God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4).

Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, is also the author and perfecter of our joy. In this we can take heart: the joy we know in part now—through worship, beautiful music, good meals, and dear friends—we will one day know in full when we stand in the presence of our Savior.

Verses for Reflection or Memorization

- Psalm 16:9–11
- Psalm 19:7–11
- Matthew 25:21
- 2 Corinthians 8:2
- James 1:2
- 1 Peter 1:8

Week Five: Philippians 4:2-23

Week 5—Day 1

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 106:1 – Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Old Testament scholars call Psalm 106 a “community lament.” A lament psalm is a cry or plea to God, often when the author is going through or remembering devastating events.

Psalm 106 is anonymous and likely written during or after the Babylonian exile described in Jeremiah 39–52. Interestingly, the psalm begins and ends with a call to praise.

Use merriam-webster.com to look up “praise” as a verb and pay special attention to the second definition. Write it out in the space provided: _____

Something happens in our hearts and minds when we recount God’s perfections, or in the case of Psalm 106, the mighty victories God has given the Israelites. God invites us to praise him, even during our worst trials, because praise reminds us of God’s power over our circumstances.

We give God our praise.

He grants us power, perseverance, and strength.

What are you worried about today?

Talk to God

Spend a few minutes praising him, and ask him to fill you with strength and power. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 4:2–23 in your Bible or the printed text in the back of your workbook. Do you see any words, sentences, or verses that reference the themes of this letter? If so, highlight them accordingly:

- Unity – orange
- Friendship – green
- Joy – yellow

What stood out to you? _____

What questions do you have? _____

Understand the Text

Historians credit a man named William Whittingham with the addition of chapters and verses in our Bibles. Whittingham, an English Bible scholar, arrived in Geneva, Switzerland, after Queen Mary took the throne of England in 1553. Along with several other English scholars, Whittingham immediately set out to translate the New Testament into English, using John Calvin’s commentaries and various Latin translations.

In 1557, he distributed his New Testament, complete with marginal notes, chapter breaks, and verse numbers. This highly praised work ultimately became part of the Geneva Bible.

The words of the Bible come from God, but the chapter and verse divisions come from humans, and every now and then, we bump into passages where the chapter breaks interrupt the author’s flow of thought.

Philippians 4:1 presents a good example of bad division.

Translators disagree about where to end chapter three and begin chapter four. Some, like the NET, place the break at 4:1. But if you look at the ESV, NIV, or NLT, you'll see they connect 4:1 with Paul's argument that began in 3:1.

Using <https://biblehub.com/philippians/4-1.htm>, look up Philippians 4:1.

What is the first word in the sentence? _____

What is the "therefore" there for? I'll give you a hint. Paul is concluding his thought train that began in Philippians 1:27. Briefly summarize Paul's argument from 1:27–4:1 using the prompts below or write it out in your own words.:

Paul encourages the Philippian believers to (1:27) _____

He tells the Philippians they can do this by (2:5) _____

In light of this, the Philippians should (2:6–4:1) _____

Now we turn our attention to Euodia and Syntyche. All we know about the two women is what we glean from these two verses of Scripture. Reread verses two and three and write your observations in the space provided.:

We don't know the nature of Euodia and Syntyche's disagreement. We do know that in reading Paul's words about them we have touched on one of the primary reasons Paul wrote this letter. The Philippian Christians lived counter-culturally in hostile territory. They faced constant temptation to conform to their surroundings. The pressure to revere Caesar as Lord was immense and inescapable. The church should have provided a haven, but infighting threatened that.

Glance back at Philippians 2:12–16. How did the division within the church threaten their witness to the world?⁵⁹

⁵⁹ By "witness" I mean what the outside world might think of Christianity or Christians when they saw the church fighting itself.

Reread Philippians 4:4–9. Put a checkmark over every command.

What seven instructions does Paul give the Philippians?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Why does Paul tell the Philippians to rejoice? _____

Why is this cause for rejoicing? Take a moment to think this through and apply it to your current circumstances. _____

Paul writes (v. 4), “Let everyone see your gentleness” (NET). Use merriam-webster.com to define “gentle.” Read all four definitions and summarize in your own words what Paul is asking the Philippians to do:

Before we move on to 4:6–9, I want to introduce you to a psychological tool. If you’ve taken a psych class or two, you may know it.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT): A psychologist may introduce CBT to help a patient correct unhealthy thoughts that might lead to harmful behavior.

According to the American Psychological Association, doctors base CBT on three propositions:⁶⁰

⁶⁰ “What is Cognitive Behavior Therapy?” in *American Psychological Association* (July, 2017), accessed on July 21, 2021. <https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral>

1. We suffer psychologically because we think unhealthy thoughts.
2. We often learn unhealthy thought patterns from trauma, perceived trauma, or from those in our environment.
3. We can learn how to change our thought patterns.

CBT seeks to identify the unhealthy thought pattern and replace the harmful thoughts or behaviors with healthy practices.

Nearly two thousand years before Dr. Aaron T. Beck pioneered CBT, Paul used a similar method to encourage the Philippians.

Read Philippians 4:6–9.

Over the years, people have read 4:6–7 and come to this conclusion:

Paul commands the Philippians to stop “being anxious.”

Therefore, anxiety is a sin.

Before we leap to that conclusion, let’s take a second look at 2:28.

Paul lists two reasons he is eager to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____

Now reread 4:1–9.

How do you read Paul’s tone? _____

Paul suggests that the Philippians replace their anxious thoughts with a different action. What is that action (v. 6)? _____

What attitude should they have (v. 6)? _____

What does God give in return (v. 7)? _____

Look up the following verses:

- Isaiah 26:3–4
- John 14:27

What is the difference between the peace of God and the peace of the world? _____

Live the Text

Yesterday, in the “Prepare Your Heart” section, we saw that God exchanges our praise for his power. Today we read of another divine exchange: Our anxiety for his peace.

What seems simple in theory, however, can prove difficult in practice. That’s why I love Philippians 4:4–9. Paul encourages his readers to rejoice (positive) and not worry (negative). But he doesn’t stop with the command. He shows how to do it.

Philippians 4:8–9 – Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things. And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you.

When anxious thoughts invade, we can replace them with better thoughts. Let’s make our own CBT list. Fill in the blanks:

What is true? _____

What is worthy of respect? _____

What is just? _____

What is pure? _____

What is lovely? _____

What is commendable? _____

What is excellent? _____

What is praiseworthy? _____

What brings you joy? _____

Think about these things.

And the God of peace will be with you.

Week 5—Day 3

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 101:1–3a – I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will make music. I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh, when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

Scholars call Psalm 101 a “Royal Psalm.” David wrote it as a reflection on the kind of character he wanted to exhibit as king. Can you feel his worship oozing out of every word and see it dripping onto his parchment?

Circle all of the verbs and jot down any thoughts you have about these verses. _____

As David strives to act in a “manner worthy of” the LORD, notice the order of his actions.

He guards his worship. He makes God the object of his praise.

He guards his thoughts. He thinks on “the way that is blameless.”

He guards his desires. He longs to sit in the LORD’s presence.

He guards his ways. He sets an example of integrity within his household.

He guards his eyes. He remembers that the things we gaze upon always worm their way into our hearts.

Perhaps Paul recalled this psalm as he wrote the words in Philippians 4:8–9.

Talk to God

Are there any pockets in your life where you have misplaced worship? Unguarded thoughts? Unwholesome desires? Misguided ways? Wandering eyes? Take a moment to unburden yourself to the LORD. End with a word of praise. _____

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 4:2–23 in the text provided in your workbook or your Bible and mark it in the following way:

- Blue circle – all logical relationships reflected in the language, like *so that, therefore, in order to, because, for, since, or for this reason*.
- Purple underline – all temporal (time) relationships, like *now, immediately, before, after, or the next day*.
- Brown underline – contrasts and correlations such as *either-or, whether-or, if-then, both-and, but, although, yet, and however*.

Did anything strike you? Do you have any questions? List them here: _____

Understand the Text

Reread 4:10–14.

Finally, in verse 10, we get to Paul’s primary reason for sending this letter—to thank the Philippians for the financial gift they sent with Epaphroditus. We will address this briefly today and more in-depth tomorrow, but the Philippian church has more than once helped Paul financially.

At an earlier date, Paul had written to the church at Corinth describing the Philippians’ generosity. Read it below in the NLT.

2 Corinthians 8:1–5 – Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. ²They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

³For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. ⁴They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. ⁵They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

Describe the circumstances of the Philippians: (v. 2) _____

Describe the attitude of the Philippians (v. 2): _____

What did this attitude result in (v. 2)? _____

How much did the Philippians give (v. 3)? _____

Who made them do it (v.3)? _____

What word did Paul use to describe how the Philippians viewed financial contributions (v. 4) _____

The kind of generosity Paul commends flows out of abundant joy, regardless of the giver's financial situation. Clearly their joy was not based on wealth or quality of life. So where did their joy come from? Based on your study of Philippians so far, where do you think their joy found its source? Be specific and elaborate a little. _____

Paul elaborates to the Corinthian church, describing in detail how God's economy runs on generosity.

2 Corinthians 8:10–14 – You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, so that by his poverty, he could make you rich.

¹⁰ Here is my advice: It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. ¹¹ Now, you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have. ¹² Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don't have. ¹³ Of course, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourselves. I only mean that there should be some equality. ¹⁴ Right now, you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.⁶¹

According to these words of Paul, how should Christians approach generosity? _____

What kind of attitude should Christians have regarding money? _____

⁶¹ NLT

Fill in the blank from the last sentence of v. 14:

In this way, things will be _____

Based on Paul’s message to the Corinthians, how does God plan to expand his kingdom on earth before Christ comes back to reclaim it? _____

Paul writes that he has “learned to be content in any circumstance” (Phil 4:11).

The Greek word behind “content” is *autarkēs*. This is a compound word from *autos*, meaning “self,” and *arkeo*, meaning “to be enough, sufficient, adequate.” We see only *autarkēs* only once (here, 4:11) in the New Testament, but *arkeo* shows up in several places.

Read the verses below in the NIV to get a better feel for the word.

2 Corinthians 9:8 – And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, *having all that you need*, you will abound in every good work.

1 Timothy 6:6 – But godliness with *contentment* is great gain.

Matthew 6:34 – Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has *enough* trouble of its own.

How do you think Paul would complete these sentences?

Contentment is a result of _____

Contentment should have little to do with _____

Philippians 4:13 contains one of the more well-known passages of Scripture, quoted by athletes, entrepreneurs, and inspirational speakers. Based on a careful reading of verses 11 and 12, what do you think Paul is talking about when he says, “I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me?”

Live the Text

Paul pulls no punches in today’s lesson, and honestly, I feel the blows. He goes straight to the heart of what most Americans value over everything else: Comfort.

But Paul won’t let Christ-followers stay in our comfort zones—not if we are to “conduct [ourselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Paul expected generosity from those who professed belief in Jesus, and not only when times were good. The Philippians had given joyfully out of their poverty. They valued building God’s kingdom over their comfort and begged “again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem” (2 Cor 8:4).

Today, let’s invite God to examine our hearts on the matters of generosity and contentment. I’m doing this right along with you, and no one has to see your answers.



Heart Check

Remember, this exercise should grow us, not shame us.

If you go to church, do you give it portion of your income? _____

Do you regularly support any charitable causes? _____

Do you give regularly to any missionaries or organizations that work to share the gospel in areas outside of your town, state, or country? _____

When someone asks you to give to a cause, what is your first reaction? _____

Do you have any unmet needs right now? _____

Would you describe yourself as content? _____

In the Old Testament, sacrifices and offerings made up a regular part of worship. The same is true today. When we sacrifice on behalf of a heavenly kingdom cause, we actively worship God. When we offer our time, treasure, and/or talents so that more people can know Jesus, we love the Lord with our actions.

As we seek to live out today’s lesson, ask God to identify a person in your circle who has a need. Can you meet it? I believe it will fill you with joy and deepen your love for the Lord.

Observe the Text

Read Philippians 4:2–23 and record at least five details you noticed. _____

Understand the Text

Reread 4:10–18 Does anything strike you as strange about Paul’s tone or words in this “thank you” note? If so, what? _____

Theologian Lynn Cohick, in her commentary on Philippians, wrote this:

In the ancient world, economic exchange was also personal exchange. Friendship, patronage, buying, and selling—all these things happened within the honor/shame culture, which supported a complex hierarchy of social status and rank. That means that Paul might paint himself as a client of the Philippians if he were to thank them effusively for their gift. Or he might seem to hint that the Philippians need to give more because he, their father in the faith, was in prison. Thus what seems like Paul tiptoeing around this issue of thanks for a gift is really in a delicate dance trying to avoid stepping on social toes.⁶²

Why do you think Paul waited until the end of the letter to thank the Philippians? _____

Why such a flimsy “thank you?” _____

⁶² Cohick, 237.

Read the following Scriptures.

1. 1 Corinthians 9:4, 11–12
2. 2 Corinthians 11:9
3. 1 Thessalonians 2:9

What differences did you notice in Paul’s attitude about receiving help from the Corinthians and the Thessalonians as opposed to that of the Philippians? _____

What might be the cause of those differences? _____

Let’s take a closer look at some of the imagery Paul uses.

The ESV renders Philippians 4:10 this way:

Philippians 4:10 – I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

The word translated to “revived” is the Greek word *anathallō*. *Anathallō* carries an agricultural sense, meaning “to rebloom” or “regrow.”

Paul uses agriculture imagery again in 4:17.

Philippians 4:17 – Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

Look up the following verses and describe what “fruit” refers to in each case.

- Matthew 7:15–16 _____
- John 1:1–4 _____

What did Paul pray for the Philippians (1:11)? _____

Live the Text

Yesterday we conducted a heart check, looking at generosity and contentment. Paul considers generosity evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives; thus, we count generosity as a “fruit” of the Spirit, even though Paul omits it from a longer list of fruit he gave to the Galatians:

Galatians 5:22–23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law.



Today, let’s do a fruit check.

Which of the listed fruits of the Spirit present the greatest challenge for you? _____

In what areas of your life (work, friends, marriage, kids) do you have the most room for “fruit growth?”

Jesus told his disciples that they had to abide in him if they hoped to grow good fruit (Jn 15). As his followers, we do that through Bible reading, prayer, and authentic, honest relationships with godly friends, and worshipping with other Christ-followers. I have pockets in my own life where I ask people to hold me accountable. When I confess my fruit failure, they listen, encourage me, and pray for me.

Ask the Lord to guide you as he grows you. What action might you take today to work on one of the fruits Paul listed? _____

Week 5—Day 5

Prepare Your Heart

Psalm 149:1 – Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly!

What have you learned about the LORD through the course of this study? _____

Have you sensed the LORD working in you? If yes, how? _____

Talk to God

Spend a moment praising your Heavenly Father, who loves you and calls you by name. Lift up any concerns or burdens you have, knowing that he loves it when you talk to him. _____

Observe the Text

Congratulations! You have made it to the last day of the last week of our journey through Philippians. I hope and pray that God has blessed you through this process.

On our final day together, read the Book of Philippians all the way through. By now, you've grown familiar with the text. Fight the temptation to speed through it. Instead, slow down. Ask the Lord to speak to you.

When you finish, write down any new observations that jump out at you.

Understand the Text

Philippians 4:21–23 – Give greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me here send greetings. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. ⁶³

A quick skim of Paul's final greetings and conclusions in his other letters show that he ends most of his epistles similarly. In Philippians, he lists three groups of people who send greetings to the church in Philippi.

Who are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

⁶³ NET

Let's get picky for a moment.

A literal translation of Philippians 4:21 would read this way:

Philippians 4:21 – Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.⁶⁴

Did you notice the slight difference between the two versions of v 21? If so, what is it? _____

Verse 4:22 reads, “all the saints.” Paul used a plural to refer to the entire group of believing Christians in Rome, the place of his imprisonment.⁶⁵ I think differentiating between “all” and “every” adds to our understanding of Paul’s heart toward the Philippians and Jesus’s heart toward us. For more on this, see the Digging Deeper section following today’s lesson.

Look again at the three groups from whom Paul sent greetings. The third group included “those who belong to Caesar’s household.”

The implications for the gospel of Paul’s association with these people are significant. Let’s review to find out why. Think back to previous lectures and assignments, but don’t worry if you don’t know the answers. We will go over these points in our final lecture.

Philippi was a colony of what empire? _____

What was the nature of the external opposition the Philippians faced? _____

What kind of worship did Roman authorities force? _____

The Roman Empire opposed any movement that venerated a deity or person above Caesar, and the recipients of Paul’s letter were under the reign of Nero—a particularly vicious (and arguably unstable) ruler. What do you think it meant to them to know there were Christians among those who worked the closest to the emperor? _____

⁶⁴ The ESV follows this rendering.

⁶⁵ Some scholars, including N. T. Wright, argue that Paul was imprisoned in Ephesus, rather than Rome. I find the evidence, in part based on these verses, to strengthen the Roman imprisonment argument.

Live the Text

God works from the inside out.

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, he entered into his world to create the man and woman. Before they sinned and ate the fruit, he dwelled with them in Eden.

God's plan has always been to dwell *with* his people in the land. Not ruling from a faraway palace, like Caesar, but living in close fellowship with those who love him.

Isaiah prophesied that the promised Messiah would be called "Immanuel"—God *with* us.⁶⁶ And when Jesus began his ministry, he worked from the inside out. He captivated hearts before he mobilized hands.

And what began with a small group of disciples exploded into a global movement still spreading today.

You are a part of that movement.

The story of the Bible is your story. God raised up a deliverer to reconcile his people (including you) from bondage and reconcile them to himself.

Jesus is our deliverer. And if you have placed your faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in you.

We stand together in the Church Expansion age. And God has equipped you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to step in as the deliverer who points people to the Deliverer to rescue more people from the bondage of sin and reconcile more people to God the Father.

And the church expands. And God's glory spreads.

What are your gifts and strengths? _____

Do seem to enjoy or excel in a particular area of service? _____

Who in your circle of influence needs the love of Christ? _____

Ask the Lord how he might use you to expand his kingdom and glorify his Son. God has prepared good works for you to walk in (Eph 2:10), and you will find your deepest joy in following Christ.

⁶⁶ Isaiah 7:14.

Digging Deeper

Greek Keyword Study: *Pasan* (Πᾶσαν)

Philippians 4:19 – But my God will meet your every (*pasan*) need according to his abundance in glory in Christ Jesus.

One word can make all the difference.

Consider “all” versus “every.” It might not sound significant, but the authors of Scripture chose their words carefully.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we find two instances, 4:19 and 4:21, where translators have used “all” instead of “every.”

Pas, or *pasan* in this case, is a Greek adjective meaning “every” when it’s used in the singular sense and “all” in its plural form. The NIV, NLT, and KJV each translate Philippians 4:19 to read: “My God will meet *all* of your needs.”

In the Greek text, both *pasan* (every/all) and *chreian* (need) are singular. So, the proper translation says, “But my God will meet your every need.”

Why does this matter?

It matters because it gives us a glimpse of God’s heart toward us.

Every carries a subtle, though significant, difference.

It’s true; all means all. All of them. None of them are left out. But “all” also lumps your needs into one, big, general group. “Every” is more specific than “all.” God sees your every single need. Each one individually. He doesn’t look at the world and see a simmering stew of problems; he sees each individual hurt. Each individual heartache. Each individual tear. Each individual fear.

And he will meet your every single need through his abundance in glory in Christ.

We find this same nuance in Philippians 4:21. The NET reads:

Philippians 4:21 – Give greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

Again, the Greek text contains a singular *panta* (every—same word, different gender) and a singular *hagion* (saint).

This time we see how Paul tenderly cares for each individual in his Philippian flock. He didn’t want the letter reader to cast out a generic, “Paul greets you.” He wanted each individual greeted personally, by name, with love.

In this, Paul reflects the heart of Christ. Jesus, referring to himself as the Good Shepherd, said, “The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (Jn 10:3).

Jesus calls each of his people by name.

Where we see crowds, he sees souls. Where we see the mob, Jesus sees the mission—individual people, each stamped with the divine image of the triune God.

Every person has a story. Every story includes heartache. Every heartache needs a healer.

What Does This Mean for Us?

Jesus calls none of us to “ministry.”

He calls each of us to serve his people.

Today, more and more children say they want to be TikTok, YouTube, or Instagram influencers when they grow up. Influencers amass followers for profit. They look for the “all.”

Let’s look for the “every.”

God gives each of us a circle of influence. Every person in it matters, and God desires that every person would come to know his Son so that not one of them would perish (2 Pet 3:9).

Now What?

A few years ago, my husband and I went to a friend’s wedding in Fort Worth, Texas, and a group of us decided to stay in a hotel for the night.

I woke up first, and wanting to avoid disturbing my husband, I grabbed my purse and set out for the nearest coffee shop. My phone told me I was a mere half-mile from caffeinated greatness, and I covered the distance in no time.

To my pleasant surprise, a few others in our group had the same idea. We entered the coffee shop together and took our places in the sizable line.

One of my friends purchased an extra coffee and a breakfast sandwich, and as we walked out the door, she asked me to wait a moment.

An elderly gentleman, clearly homeless, sat on a bench nearby.

My friend approached him and asked him if he was hungry.

He was.

Yes, for coffee and food. But more so for eye contact and conversation. The three of us chatted for a while, and then my husband called, wondering where I was. My friend and I hugged the gentleman before we left.

He wept, and God stirred something in my heart.

Most people see “all” the homeless people and grumble at the problem.

My friend saw the man as a soul stamped with the image of God.

Jesus calls none of us to “ministry.”

He calls each of us to serve the people he puts in front of us.

Every soul precious. Every soul worth dying for.

Including yours.

Questions for Reflection

- Where are the places I go that present opportunities for me to make eye contact and conversation?
- How can I create a margin in my day to slow down, see, and serve people when I find a need?
- In what pockets might I be guilty of lumping people together in an “all” mentality?

Leader's Guide

Thank you for volunteering to lead a small group! In my experience, the deepest ministry always occurs in these intimate settings.

If you are feeling any pressure to know the answers or get through all of the questions each week, let me ease that for you. We will go through the answers in the lectures and the questions below exist to keep the conversation moving, but I prefer organic discussion where the students ask the questions. So consider the following a guide to help you rather than a rule to stick to.

Discussion Questions for Week One:

1. Who had an “aha!” moment this week from the homework or the “Prepare Your Heart” section that affected you? What was it?
2. Who had questions or observations from this week’s homework?
3. Why do you think Paul identified himself and Timothy as “slaves?”
4. We live in a world dominated by celebrity culture—even in the Christian sphere. How do you think Paul would respond to that culture?
5. Turn to page 33. How do we as a society use the word “love?” How does that differ from the kind of *agape* love Paul wants Christians to grow in?
6. Has anyone experienced that kind of *agape* love by someone not related to you? Will you share it with the group?
7. Who do you know who embodies *agape* love? Can you give us an example?

Discussion Questions for Week Two:

1. Who had an “aha!” moment this week from the homework or the “Prepare Your Heart” section that affected you? What was it?
2. Who had questions or observations from this week’s homework?
3. What happened to Paul that served to advance the gospel?
4. Why do you suppose Paul’s imprisonment made his fellow Christian brothers and sisters more confident to share God’s word?
5. Paul and the Christians of his day faced real danger for telling people about Christ. What kind of pressures do we face today when it comes to sharing our faith?
6. Should Paul’s reaction to persecution shape ours? If so, how?
7. How did Paul react to the people preaching the gospel from selfish motives?
8. How do we respond in the face of hypocrisy?

Discussion Questions for Week Three:

1. Who had an “aha!” moment this week from the homework or the “Prepare Your Heart” section that affected you? What was it?
2. Who had questions or observations from this week’s homework?
3. Have someone read Philippians 2:2–8. When Paul tells readers to “have this mind” among them, what does he mean? Why is this important?
4. Paul tells the Philippians in 2:12 to “work out their own salvation with awe and reverence” or “fear and trembling.” If salvation is God’s gift of grace, how are we supposed to understand this? How should we live our lives in light of this?
5. Turn to page 78 and read your answers on what it means to be a “Timothy kind of friend.” What makes someone a Timothy kind of friend? Do you have a friend like this? Can you share something about them with the group?
6. Speaking of friends, experts say we are living through an epidemic of loneliness. Why do you think that is? How can we as the church change that?

Discussion Questions for Week Four:

1. Who had an “aha!” moment this week from the homework or the “Prepare Your Heart” section that affected you? What was it?
2. Who had questions or observations from this week’s homework?
3. Have someone read Philippians 3:1–3. How is joy a safeguard for the Philippians?
4. What if, instead of looking at joy as something to feel, we addressed it as something to practice? What would it look like to practice joy? How do we do that?
5. Turn to page 95 and look over the list of Paul’s accomplishments. Why does he consider his pedigree or resume to be human excrement?
6. What are the things the world values most today?
7. How can those things keep us from Christ?
8. What are the things Christians value most? How can those things keep us from Christ? How should we live in light of that?

Discussion Questions for Week Five:

1. Who had an “aha!” moment this week from the homework or the “Prepare Your Heart” section that affected you? What was it?
2. Who had questions or observations from this week’s homework?
3. Turn to page 115. Why do you think Paul called out Euodia and Syntyche by name?
4. Have someone read Matthew 18:15–17. How do we reconcile Jesus’s teaching on confrontation with the way Paul handled Euodia and Syntyche?
5. Have someone read Philippians 4:6–9. What has the church and society misunderstood about anxiety? What does the Bible teach us about attaining peace? How are you doing at this?

Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Chapter 1 From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons. ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ I always pray with joy in my every prayer for all of you ⁵ because of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ For I am sure of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is right for me to think this about all of you, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel all of you became partners in God's grace together with me. ⁸ For God is my witness that I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight ¹⁰ so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

¹² I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel: ¹³ The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ, ¹⁴ and most of the brothers and sisters, having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment, now more than ever dare to speak the word fearlessly.

¹⁵ Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so from love because they know that I am placed here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, because they think

they can cause trouble for me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What is the result? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. ²⁰ My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. ²¹ For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²² Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me, yet I don't know which I prefer: ²³ I feel torn between the two, because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, ²⁴ but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body. ²⁵ And since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that what you can be proud of may increase because of me in Christ Jesus, when I come back to you.

²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that—whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent—I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and by not being intimidated in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of their destruction, but of your salvation—a sign which is from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are encountering the same conflict that you saw me face and now hear that I am facing.

Chapter 2 Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort provided by love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any affection or mercy, ² complete my joy and be of the same mind, by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. ³ Instead of being

motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. ⁴ Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. ⁵ You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had,

⁶ who though he existed in the form of God

did not regard equality with God

as something to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied himself

by taking on the form of a slave,

by looking like other men,

and by sharing in human nature.

⁸ He humbled himself,

by becoming obedient to the point of death

—even death on a cross!

⁹ As a result God highly exalted him

and gave him the name

that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus

every knee will bow

—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—

¹¹ and every tongue confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord

to the glory of God the Father.

¹² So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence, ¹³ for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort—for the sake of his good pleasure—is God. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without blemish though you live in a crooked and perverse society, in which you shine as lights in the world ¹⁶ by holding on to the word of life so that on the day of Christ I will have a reason to boast that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice together with all of you. ¹⁸ And in the same way you also should be glad and rejoice together with me.

¹⁹ Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be encouraged by hearing news about you. ²⁰ For there is no one here like him who will readily demonstrate his deep concern for you. ²¹ Others are busy with their own concerns, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know his qualifications, that like a son working with his father, he served with me in advancing the gospel. ²³ So I hope to send him as soon as I know more about my situation, ²⁴ though I am confident in the Lord that I too will be coming to see you soon.

²⁵ But for now I have considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus to you. For he is my brother, coworker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to me in my need. ²⁶ Indeed, he greatly missed all of you and was distressed because you heard that he had been ill. ²⁷ In fact he became so ill that he nearly died. But God showed mercy to him—and not to him only, but also to me—so that I would not have grief on top of grief. ²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you can rejoice and I can be free from anxiety. ²⁹ So welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, ³⁰ since it

was because of the work of Christ that he almost died. He risked his life so that he could make up for your inability to serve me.

Chapter 3 *Finally*, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! To write this again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! ³For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, exult in Christ Jesus, and do not rely on human credentials ⁴—though mine too are significant. If someone thinks he has good reasons to put confidence in human credentials, I have more: ⁵I was circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. ⁶In my zeal for God I persecuted the church. According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless. ⁷But these assets I have come to regard as liabilities because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things—indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I may gain Christ, ⁹and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ’s faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ’s faithfulness. ¹⁰My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are

behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, ¹⁴ with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways. ¹⁶ Nevertheless, let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.

¹⁷ Be imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and watch carefully those who are living this way, just as you have us as an example. ¹⁸ For many live, about whom I have often told you, and now, with tears, I tell you that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is the belly, they exult in their shame, and they think about earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven—and we also eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.

Chapter 4 **So then,** my brothers and sisters, dear friends whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand in the Lord in this way, my dear friends!

² I appeal to Euodia and to Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I say also to you, true companion, help them. They have struggled together in the gospel ministry along with me and Clement and my other coworkers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see your gentleness. The Lord is near! ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or

praiseworthy, think about these things. ⁹ And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I have great joy in the Lord because now at last you have again expressed your concern for me. (Now I know you were concerned before but had no opportunity to do anything.) ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. ¹² I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. ¹³ I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you did well to share with me in my trouble.

¹⁵ And as you Philippians know, at the beginning of my gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in this matter of giving and receiving except you alone. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica on more than one occasion you sent something for my need. ¹⁷ I do not say this because I am seeking a gift. Rather, I seek the credit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸ For I have received everything, and I have plenty. I have all I need because I received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, very pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ May glory be given to God our Father forever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Give greetings to all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me here send greetings. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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