



Paul's Letter to the
Philippians

Love, Knowledge, Peace, Unity & Joy

A 4-SESSION BIBLE STUDY
to Help You Live What You Believe

This booklet belongs to:

ROAD MAP

This has been designed as a 4-week group Bible study journey.

So, let's begin with a few rules of the road:



1. Begin and end your study with prayer.
2. Be gentle and respectful of one another. (1 Pet. 3:15)
3. Keep private things private. Don't gossip or start rumors.
4. Do what God tells you to do. (John 2:5)
5. Keep in touch with members of your group.

Some of my Group Contacts

Name	E-mail	Phone	Notes
Group Leader			
2			
3			
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Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture citations are from the New International Version (NIV) Bible.
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RULES FOR BIBLE STUDY

In Scripture, God chose to use almost every available kind of literary form (genre): narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry, proverbs, prophetic oracles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics (from the Greek) is the practice of Bible study and interpretation.

Steps to Bible Study include:

Pray about it: (1 Corinthians 2:11, 13-14)

Observe it: What does the text actually say? (Exegesis vs. Eisegesis)
The Word of God is a report, and God is its writer. Therefore, we must take it at face value if we believe what He says.

Interpret it: What does the text say in its context?
The aim of proper interpretation is to get at the “plain meaning from the text.”
What was the author’s original intent and how might the original recipients understand it based on their culture and conduct.

Historical Context: Differs from book to book and has to do with (1) the time, location and culture of the writer and his readers (2) the occasion of the book.

Literary Context means (1) that words only have meaning in sentences, and (2) that biblical sentences primarily only have clear meaning in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences.

Apply it: What is the point? How does the text apply to me? (Jam 1:22)
What will I do? When will I do it? Where will I do it? How will I do it?

GOD IS GOOD! Interpretation **Must Always Agree with the Central Core of the Bible.**

“The fallenness of all humanity, redemption from that fallenness as God’s gracious activity through Christ’s death and resurrection, and the consummation of that redemptive work by the return of Christ... are clearly part of this central core.”

(Fee & Stuart. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth. 2009)

Here, we use the technique called inductive Bible study, which involves an unbiased exploration of the text (exegesis) and deriving conclusion from observable facts.

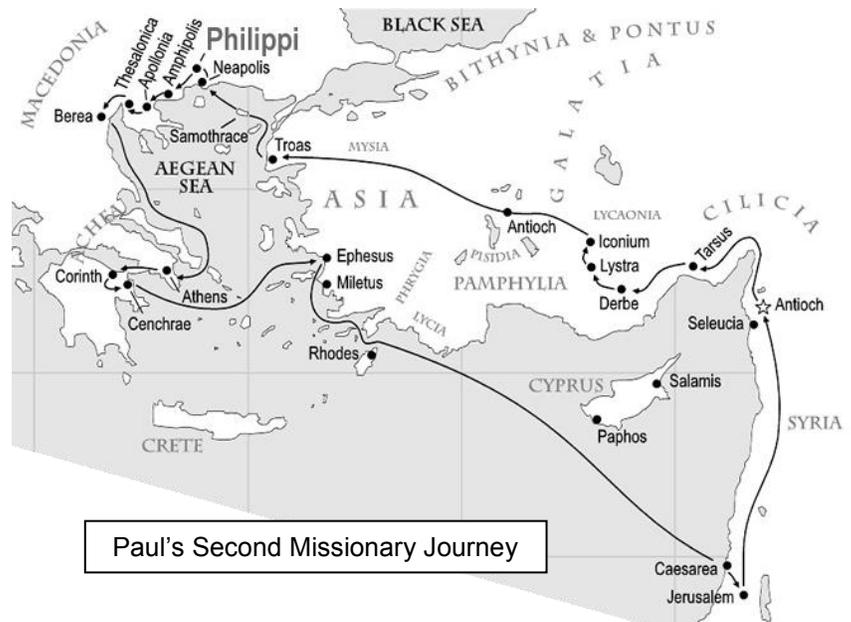
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Epistle (Letter) to the Philippians is usually referred to simply as Philippians. It is the 11th book in the New Testament and one of the 4 prison letters (along with Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon) attributed to the Apostle Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome around 62 AD.

Paul and his young disciple, Timothy (Acts 16:1–12), visited the City of Philippi for the first time on his second missionary journey around 49–51 AD. It was the first Christian church in Macedonia (Eastern Europe) and visited them on several subsequent occasions (Acts 19:22; 20:3–6).

Some of the key events that took place in Philippi included:

- Lydia becomes a believer and begins the first house church in the city (Acts 16:11–15)
- Paul casts a demon out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16–18)
- Paul and Silas are imprisoned (Acts 16:19–24)
- The Philippian jailer is converted (Acts 16:25–34)
- Paul and Silas leave Philippi (Acts 16:35–40)
- Paul sails from Philippi to Troas (Acts 20:5–6)



The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus, their envoy ("messenger [Grk. *apostolon*] and minister [*leitourgon*]" Phil. 2.25), to Rome with contributions as an expression of their **partnership** and **loving concern** for Paul (Phil 1:3–5, 2:30, 4:10–19).

During the journey to deliver their **gift** (Phil 4:17), Epaphroditus contracted some life-threatening debilitating illness (*esthenese*, Phil 2:26–27). Happily, he recovers and shares news of the church's internal matters with Paul, who sends the letter to Philippian Church.

THE MAIN PRAYER TOPICS

While Paul's opening prayer is for love (1:9), based on knowledge of Christ, his final prayer is for the peace of God (4:7), which surpasses all understanding. Thus the concepts of **love**, **knowledge** and **peace** are jointly developed in this Epistle

At the core of the letter lies a theology focused on Christ (*Christology*) and the power of the cross that unites various exhortations to Christian **unity** and **joy** in the Lord's service.

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:1-29

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil. 1:4-6, NIV)

In verse 1, Paul does not use his title “Apostle,” as he had done in other letters, but rather “slave (Grk. *doulos*) of Christ.” He did not emphasize his authority, but rather made a personal appeal to the church as both their servant and example.

Paul addresses the believers as “Saints,” which refers to those separated from the world and dedicated to Christ. Paul also especially mentions the titles of the leaders of the church, “deacons and overseers” (elders) to honor them as partners in the service of Christ.

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER (1-11)

1. **Read verses 1-8.** Why is Paul joyful and thankful? What did he believe about God's work in them? Why is he confident about this?

2. **Read verses 9-11.** Why does real love need to be complemented by knowledge? What is the source of the fruit of righteousness? (Jn 15:5, Ro 5:3-5, Heb. 12:10-11) What underlying purpose of life does Paul's prayer reveal?

IN CHAINS FOR CHRIST (12-18a)

3. **Read verses 12-14.** What was Paul's situation? Why was he joyful and thankful to be in prison for Jesus? How did his imprisonment advance the gospel?

4. **Read verses 15-18a.** What were the motives of some who also preached the gospel during Paul's imprisonment? What was Paul's attitude toward this? What can we learn from him?

UNITY IN CHRIST

Philippians 2:1-22

...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love,
being one in spirit and of one mind. (Phil. 2:2, NIV)

CONSIDER OTHERS (1-4)

1. What are the five things Paul lists as benefits of being united in Christ in Verse 1?
What did Jesus himself say about abiding (John 15:4-5, 9-10)?
2. **Read verse 2.** What can the Philippians do to make Paul happy?
What does it mean to be like-minded? (1 Pe 3:8-9)
3. **Read verses 3-4.** What does it mean for a Christian to consider others better than themselves? (Gal 3:28)

THE MIND (ATTITUDE) OF JESUS CHRIST (5-11)

4. **Read verses 6-8.** How did Jesus display humility? How could Jesus be joyful knowing of the suffering he would have to endure on the cross (Hebrews 12:2 b)?
5. **Read verses 9-11.** How was Christ rewarded for His humble and sacrificial life?

PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL

Philippians 3:1-21

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward
in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14, NIV)

TO KNOW, TO SHARE & TO BECOME (1-6)

1. What is the continued theme Paul mentions in Phil. 3:1?
2. **Read verse 3.** Christians worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Jesus Christ and have no confidence in the flesh. What do these three things mean to you? (See also Eph 2:8-9 & Rom 2:29)
3. **Read verses 4-6.** Beside circumcision, what are the other Jewish credentials did Paul have? Considering all that Christ gives me, how can forms of legalism and traditional dogma rob me of unity and joy?

TAKE OUT THE TRASH (7-11)

4. **Read verses 7-8.** With all his credentials, degrees, personal accomplishments and good works, how had Paul's value system changed?
5. **Read verses 10-11.** What is the meaning of life and how does this knowledge transform us?

STRAINING TOWARD THE GOAL (12-16)

6. **Read verses 12-13.** Think about how dangerous it is to dwell on past accomplishments and past failures. What can happen when you spend too much time looking in the rear-view mirror while moving forward?

7. **Read verses 14-16.** What is God's calling to the spiritually mature?

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP (17-21)

8. **Read verse 17.** Think about a man in your church who displays Christ-like qualities worth imitating.

9. **Read verses 18 and 19.** There are enemy agents from the devil who have one foot in the church and one foot in the world. They are self-deceived deceivers trying to divide and discourage. How can you guard against them?

10. **Read verses 20 and 21.** Why must I become like Christ, acting like I belong in heaven? (1 Cor. 15:42-49)

ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Philippians 4:1-23

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Phil. 4:4, NIV)

AGREE WITH EACH OTHER IN THE LORD (Eph. 4:1-16)

1. **Read verse 1.** Paul has heard of their growing faith and is proud of the church. Can you find someone that you can encourage with praise?
2. **Read verse 2.** Nevertheless, Paul turns his general exhortation into application when he names two women in conflict. Paul's method of handling the problem suggests that it was not a doctrinal issue, but a clash of personalities. What might it mean to "be of the same mind (agree) in the Lord?"
3. **Read verse 3.** Paul asks Syzygus (meaning: yokefellow or coworker) to help the women overcome their differences, since they have worked with Paul in the past and their names are written in the "Book of Life." Is your name written in the "Book of Life?" Can you be counted on to swallow your own pride for the sake of the Gospel?

LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD (4-7)

4. **Read verses 4-5.** What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord always? Paul urges that we should demonstrate to others that we are cool, calm, and collected. Is it a way of showing others that God is watching and will reward righteous behavior (Psalm 58:11, Prov 22:4)?

5. **Read verses 6-7.** How can anxiety cause you to lose your temper? What should you do instead? What is the result?

THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT (8-13)

6. **Read verses 8-9.** What are the righteous things that you should be entertaining in your own mind? What should be the source of the proper things we put in our minds?
7. **Read verses 10-13.** Who gives us grace to be content and satisfied whatever the circumstances?

AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE, PLEASING TO GOD (14-23)

8. **Read verses 9, 14-16.** Paul was grateful for the Philippian's concern for him. Can you be humble and accept others as God's method to help you?
9. **Read verses 17-20.** Why is it important for Christians to give sacrificially for the work of the gospel? Why is God pleased by giving Christians? How does he bless them and God?
10. **Read verses 21-23.** How does the mention of those in Caesar's household show the extent of the gospel's influence in the Roman Empire? How can you impact the world for Christ no matter what?

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