



Philippians

SHINE LIKE STARS

STUDY TWO



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INTRODUCTION

WHO WROTE PHILIPPIANS?

The apostle Paul wrote Philippians, while bound in chains. We don't know exactly where his prison was—probably in Caesarea or Rome—but the location isn't too important to the letter. The church at Philippi had a special place in Paul's heart, being the first church he founded in Europe. Paul was called to Macedonia because of a vision of a Macedonian man calling to him (Acts 16:6-10). While he had to defend his apostleship against false apostles in the Corinthian letters, and had to contend with agitators who preached a perverted gospel in Galatians, the church at Philippi were generous gospel partners. There was disunity and there were "enemies" to the church (1:28, 3:18), but Paul's warning is less dire and full of warmth.

WHY WAS PHILIPPIANS WRITTEN?

The letter was written to tell the Philippians (and us!) many things. After Paul's initial visit the church members maintained ties by sending gifts, and Paul is writing to thank them for their support. Epaphroditus brought Paul his latest gift, and almost died in doing so. Paul wanted to inform the church that Epaphroditus had recovered from a serious illness, and that he was planning to send Timothy to them soon (2:19), and offer them both as examples of Christ-centered, gospel-focused lives that Paul was encouraging the Philippians to live. But the letter is far more than an extended thank-you note. The letter was also a letter of encouragement, to express heartfelt gratitude for the many ways they support his ministry.

WHAT'S PHILIPPIANS ABOUT?

Philippians is a letter about knowing, feeling and acting in line with the greater things we have in Christ. It's a letter about joy, unity, humility, peace, growth in the gospel, and living for Christ in a dark world. No book of the Bible could be more suitable for our current season at Village Church as Philippians. Overflowing with joy and thanksgiving, Paul writes to the Philippians to encourage them to continue committing to one another as they follow Christ.

The ultimate focus of the book is Christ, who is the source of joy, the point for unity, the example of humility, the guarder of peace, and the hope of life. Philippians is unified by its joy; by the strong personal relationship between its author and its recipients; and by the many connections Paul draws between the saving work of Jesus Christ and the servant ministry of his followers. Followers who are called to live and die according to the pattern of the sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorious exaltation of Jesus himself.

It's also the only letter we have in the New Testament where Paul isn't trying to correct bad teaching or rebuke bad behaviour. It would seem that this is the best picture we have in the New Testament of what it looks like to be a mature man or woman in Christ. We see what it looks like to be someone who's growing as a follower of Jesus even here today in Brisbane city. And we see what it looks like when God creates communities that shine like stars.

Study Five: Looking Forward

As you go through the studies, use this space to jot down points for prayer:

PHILIPPIANS 3:2-21

2 Watch out for “dogs,” watch out for evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh. **3** For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh—**4** although I once also had confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5** circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; **6** regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

7 But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. **8** More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. **10** My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, **11** assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

12 Not that I have already reached the goal or am already fully mature, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. **13** Brothers, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, **14** I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus. **15** Therefore, all who are mature should think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. **16** In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. **17** Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. **18** For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. **19** Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, **20** but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. **21** He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

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Philippians 3:2-21

Big idea: Knowing Christ gives us a certain spiritual hope, which gives us greater things than any life apart from Christ.

1. Why is Paul's language so strong in verse 2? What are the "dogs" seeking to teach?
2. How would you rate Paul's Jewish report card? (v. 4-6)
3. What is Paul's goal? Why is it his goal? (verses 10-14)
4. What does "knowing Christ" look like for Paul? Doesn't he already know him? What does he mean here?
5. Are there any times that you've felt like the earth isn't your home? Does that idea drive you to comfort or despair? (v. 20-21)
6. Read verses 7-9. How can Paul say these words?
7. Do you think you could ever say them?
8. Verse 13: How are we able to forget what's behind? How are we able to reach forward to what's ahead?

Study Six: A Community of Peace

As you go through the studies, use this space to jot down points for prayer:

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! **2** I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. **3** Yes, I also ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. **4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

New International Version (1984)



Philippians 4:1-9

Big idea: Because of God's goodness he guards us in his peace, so we should enjoy peaceful intimacy with God and with one another.

1. What does verse 1 tell you about Paul's attitude towards the Philippians?
2. What do we know about Euodia and Syntyche from verses 2-3?
3. How might Paul's instructions for rejoicing, graciousness and anxiety help the rift of these two women? (v. 4-7)
4. "The Lord is near." How might these words speak to someone wading through the mire of anxiety?
5. What does the prayer we're called to in verses 6&7 look like? How often do you pray like this?
6. What images come to your mind when hearing verse 8?
7. What's one way this passage calls you to seek peaceful closeness with God or someone in your life?

Study Seven: The Fountain of Grace

As you go through the studies, use this space to jot down points for prayer:

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. **11** I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. **12** I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. **13** I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me. **14** Still, you did well by sharing with me in my hardship.

15 And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. **16** For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. **18** But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. **19** And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. Those brothers who are with me greet you. **22** All the saints greet you, but especially those from Caesar's household. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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Philippians 4:10-23

Big idea: God supplies all our needs in Jesus, so our lives can overflow with generosity.

1. How have the Philippians shown love to Paul? (verses 10, 15-16)
2. What does contentedness look like in this passage? (verses 11-13)
3. What is the profit in verse 17?
4. Read verses 18-19, and then read Ephesians 5:1-2. Where does our sacrificial generosity come from?
5. What's the point of generosity in this passage?
6. Do you believe that God supplies all your needs in Jesus?
7. What's one way that you can show the same kind of generosity as the Philippians this week?



