

FOR YOUR PROGRESS AND JOY

A study of Philippians

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Study Time suggestions for this series

These lessons are designed for you to use in the way that best fits your own schedule and preferences. Whether you schedule a regular and predictable hour each week as your study time or you prefer to have shorter and more spontaneous times to do the lesson is entirely up to you. The important goal is that week by week you find time to focus and concentrate on God's Word and your relationship with The One Who loves you and longs for you to spend time with Him through the study of the Bible. If at all possible, find a quiet and uninterrupted time and place to meet with JESUS.

READ – Take your time as you read God's Word. Read the passage through several times and in various translations. The Holy Spirit will begin to teach you as you simply take time to meditate – to absorb – to contemplate the truths that are presented.

REFLECT – The questions in the Study Guide are open ended questions for you to consider. You can use all of them or some of them. They are simply there to help you understand the passage and to stimulate your thinking and your understanding.

RESPOND - Take time to make this study personal. What do these ideas mean to you? In what ways do Paul's instructions to the church in Philippi apply to you. What would the Spirit of God like to teach you through this study?

Specific Goal - As you finish your study time, ask the Lord what He is calling you to do or to be willing for Him to give you the strength to change in your own life? You may want to re-read some of the Scriptures that you found particularly impressive. *Good intentions do not accomplish a thing; specific decisions which are prompted by God's Spirit will enable you to move forward by His grace and to experience the joy that is promised to those who put their confidence in Jesus.*

These study guides have been designed to assist you in the "Three R's" of your own Bible study – reading, reflecting, and responding.

You will find this study and many other ones at www.women-in-the-word.com and www.westudytogether.com

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Lesson 1

The Big Picture

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And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1: 9 – 11

When Paul's friends in Philippi heard that he was under house arrest in Rome and needed some food and other supplies, they responded in love and sent Epaphroditus to visit him. After recovering from a serious illness in Rome, Epaphroditus returned to Philippi bringing news and a welcome letter from Paul. There's no doubt that the believers were greatly relieved to get this letter. What do you do when you receive a long-awaited letter from a loved one? At the first chance, you open it and perhaps you scan the whole letter, looking for the most important information. Then at your leisure, with the family gathered around, you might read it out loud, slowly and carefully, taking in all of the mood and the information which is contained in it. In this case, the whole church wanted to hear the letter. Some of the believers remembered when Paul and Silas had come to town, 10 years earlier, and introduced them to Jesus. Everyone had grown to love him.

READ – Read the entire letter to the Philipians.

You can read it out loud in about 20 minutes. Try it. Use 2 or 3 different versions.

You might want to get some binder paper and copy it down in your own handwriting.

REFLECT

1. Why do you think Paul wanted to write this letter to the Philipians?
What seems to be his mood and his purpose(s)?

2. What are some of the words and/or themes that he emphasizes?

3. Make a simple outline of the letter – a tool to help you remember what is in it.

4. Imagine being Lydia or the jailer or some newer believer – Acts 16: 11 – 40.
What do you think this letter would mean to you? What parts of it would you read and re-read?

RESPOND

This would be a good time to go back through this letter and choose a few verses that will be your theme for the next 9 weeks as you study Philipians. What promise or challenge or encouragement do you need for your own “progress and joy in the faith” (Phil. 1:25)? Begin to memorize these verses. Post them on your refrigerator. Talk about them with a spiritual confidant or good friend.

Specific Goal -

What do you feel/think that is God asking you to believe or change or do today or this week? Talk it over with Him.

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Lesson 2 -

What Really Matters

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“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.”

Philippians 1: 6

Paul certainly did not let his circumstances ruin his days, dictate his emotions or limit His effectiveness. He wrote to the Philippians with a spirit of joy and thankfulness. Their mutual affection came through a shared relationship with Jesus Christ – a spiritual bond that ran deeper than human ties. They were partners in the greatest and most challenging business on earth – the spread of the Gospel. Paul had come to them miraculously and since that time (about 10 years) they had been an important part of his ministry. Who gave the most encouragement – Paul to the believers or the believers to Paul? It’s hard to say, but very impressive.

READ - Philippians 1: 1 – 11

Read these verses again and again in at least 2 translations. Re-write them in your own words.

REFLECT

1. Compare the opening greeting (verses 1 and 2) to Paul's other letters.
What is the same and what is different? What might be the reasons for the differences?
Romans
I Corinthians
II Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Colossians
2. Why is Paul so thankful to God for these people to whom he is writing? Find as many reasons as you can. How would this make them feel?
3. Notice how many times Paul refers to God and to Jesus Christ in these 11 verses. Make some observations about this emphasis.
4. What can you learn about how to pray from these verses?
5. There are at least 5 specific requests that Paul asks of God in verses 9 – 11. Give some thought to each of these requests and try to explain them simply. (Different translations will stimulate your thinking and add to your understanding.)
6. “Until the day of Christ Jesus” – How often do you think about that day? (Verses 6 & 10) Apparently Paul and the early church were highly motivated by it. Any explanation?

RESPOND

Do you think that these introductory verses would help the reader to make progress or find joy in his/her faith? In what specific ways do they encourage or motivate you?

Specific Goal -

Is God asking you to make a decision or to take a step of faith so that He can continue His “great work in you and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears”? (The Message)

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Lesson 3

Living for Christ

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**"I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,
so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me."**

Philippians 1: 25 – 26

In the midst of adversity it is often extremely difficult to grasp on to the truth that it could be used to advance the cause of Christ. It is hard to accept the fact that God will move in and through what we perceive as tragedy, trauma, or terror to accomplish His eternal purposes. We resist this idea, but people of faith always come to the place of accepting it as truth. It's much easier to ask, "Why me?" When what we need to ask is "Why not me?" It seems that it is the prayers of concerned believers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that enables Paul to continue to rejoice. What enables you?

READ – Philippians 1: 12 – 30

Read these verses again and again. Copy them in your own writing or summarize them in your own words.

REFLECT

1. The difficulties that Paul has encountered have had some very positive results. What are they and how do these things serve to encourage Paul?
2. Paul takes a very positive attitude toward those who are preaching for selfish reasons. In Galatians 1: 6 – 9 he has a very harsh attitude towards some preachers. Explain the reason for the difference.
3. One of the most cherished verses in this letter is Philippians 1: 21. As you study the context of this verse, explain carefully what you think he means by this verse. Do you share his sentiments/convictions? Why or why not?
4. He wants the Philippians to understand the reality of and reason for his joy and rejoicing so that they too can overflow with joy. Who helps you to experience joy in Christ? Are there people that are more joyful in the faith because of you?
5. What do you think Paul has in mind when he encourages them to "live in such a way that you are a credit to the message of Christ"? (Phil 1: 27) How does he expand on this idea and what will be some of the results?

RESPOND

Paul's desire for his friends is for them to experience "progress and joy in the faith". He knows that his physical presence would stimulate this. How does his letter encourage them?
How does Paul's testimony encourage you in your "progress and joy"?

Specific Goal -

Is God asking you to make a decision or to take a step of faith so that the presence of Christ is as real to you whether you are living or are with Him in heaven?

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Lesson 4

Love One Another

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“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus . . . ” Philippians 2:5

When you think of a “humble person”, what are the qualities that come to your mind? Who are the people that come to your mind? Sometimes it helps us to clarify our thinking when we consider the opposite personality trait. While it may seem on the surface that the rich, the educated, and the famous may struggle with these attitudes more than the “average citizen”, reality is that every human faces the temptation called pride. Someone has said that spiritual maturity begins when we are more willing to look at our weaknesses than our abilities; for it is then that we can admit how much we need the Spirit of God. When does pride inhibit your progress and joy?

READ - Philippians 2: 1 – 11

Read these verses out loud with expression. Summarize them. Consider memorizing verses 5 – 11. 10

REFLECT

1. Because Paul must have had some serious concerns about the divisions or disagreements that existed among the believers in Philippi, he gave them some very practical advice based on their relationship to Christ. Put into your own words the 4 ways he describes that relationship.
2. Make a list of the guidelines he gave them for living out their faith in their personal relationships. Then try to define and/or explain some of the words and ideas.
3. Is Jesus really God? It's a basic and very important question. What evidence and Bible verses do you know that convince you that He is? What would you tell someone who is not sure?
4. Why did Jesus leave His place in heaven to become man and to die? Did He have a choice? Was there any other way?
5. What was the result of Jesus' choice?
“You came from heaven to earth – to show the way
From the earth to the cross – my debt to pay
From the cross to the grave, From the grave to the sky,
Lord, I lift your name on high.”
6. What does it mean for you and me to “have the same attitude as Christ Jesus”?

RESPOND

In our culture today we are influenced by the idea of our “rights” - what the government owes us, what comforts and security we deserve, what privileges we can expect, what conveniences are due us. None of us can escape it. How do you put this together with the ideas about relationships in Phil. 2: 1 – 11? Think of some simple illustrations from daily life where your choice might be affected if you were to follow the example of Jesus.

Specific Goal -

What specific attitude or mood is the Lord asking you to change or modify in order to reflect Him in your life? How will this change be evident in your behavior and actions?

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Lesson 5

Follow My Instructions

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**“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,
for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.**

Philippians 2: 12b – 13

Friends that you can count on – they’re one of God’s greatest gifts to us, aren’t they? Paul had Timothy, a younger man, who was a gift to Paul as they traveled together on his second missionary journey. He loved Epaphroditus, one of the Philippian Christians, too. He had risked his life to come to Paul in Rome, bringing him money and supplies that he desperately needed. Both of these men used their unique talents and energy to serve the Lord and to serve their friend, Paul. Isn’t it great that Paul did not take their assistance and work for granted or feel that he deserved it? Instead he was extremely grateful and humbled by their dedication. It’s a trait of Godly leadership.

READ – Philippians 2: 12 – 30

Take some time to either copy these verses or summarize them in your own words.

REFLECT

1. “Therefore” is an important word in verse 12. Go back and read Philippians 2: 5 – 11 before you consider the rest of verse 12. How do you explain the implications of this verse? Here are some verses to help you in your thinking.

John 6: 27 – 29	Galatians 5: 24 - 26
John 15: 1 – 5, 16-17	Philippians 4: 13
Ephesians 6: 10	Colossians 1: 9 - 12
Romans 12: 1 -2	Hebrews 13: 20 - 21
2. Why would “complaining and arguing” be such important character traits to avoid? Is resentment, jealousy, discontent O.K. as long as you are silent?
3. The stars in the night sky shine the brightest when the atmosphere is the darkest, don’t they? What a great picture of those who give out and live out the Gospel of Jesus in dark places - Matthew 5: 14 – 16
What could you do to “shine a little brighter”?
4. What does Paul admire about Timothy? Read Acts 16: 1 – 12 and II Timothy 1: 1 – 7 for more details.
5. What does Paul admire about Epaphroditus?
Contrast the gifts and abilities of Timothy and Epaphroditus. Any observations?

RESPOND

“Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is *God’s* energy, an energy deep within you, God Himself willing and working at what will give Him the most pleasure.” Philippians 2: 12 – 13
What does this mean for you? (The Message)

Specific Goal – There’s no progress without taking a deliberate step forward in the direction you want to go.
What step does God want you to take? It will bring joy both to you and to Him.

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Lesson 6

Watch Out!

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**“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection
and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings . . .”**

Philippians 3: 10

What really counts in life? Your name, your race, your job, your passion, your sincerity, your effort, your kindness, your honesty, your position, your beauty and fitness, your good works, your church membership, your credentials? What else? These are all very good and admirable qualities or virtues, aren't they? Surely God will meet people at the gate of heaven and use a comparative list to decide on someone's eternal fate! That's exactly how many people determine what is important in life and view their destiny. What will your list look like when you stand before Jesus Christ?

READ – Philippians 3: 1 – 11

Read it often throughout the week. Copy down some of the verses on a card. Put it up where you will see it often.

REFLECT

1. There are three big red flags in verse 2. Who do they refer to?
2. There are 3 descriptive phrases in verse 3 which describe the believer. Can you explain them?
(See Deut. 30: 6, Romans 4: 9 -12, Romans 7:6, Galatians 5: 2 - 6 – Circumcision)
3. Why is it that “good works”, our own “righteousness”, often keep us from Christ?
In what ways can they hinder our progress in faith and our joy in Christ?
4. Any season of the year is a great time to think about “Resurrection power”!
Jesus suffered. Jesus died. He was buried. What happened on Easter morning?
Acts 2: 22 – 24
Acts 4: 8 – 10
Acts 10: 39 – 43
Romans 6: 4 - 11
Ephesians 1: 18 - 21
I Peter 1: 3
5. We want to have the power of the new life in Christ, but the idea of sharing in His sufferings is not nearly so appealing. What does suffering do for us according to the Bible?
Romans 8: 17- 18
II Corinthians 1: 3 – 7
Hebrews 2: 10 - 18
I Peter 2: 20 - 24
I Peter 3: 14 - 17
I Peter 4: 1, 12 - 19

RESPOND

How would you write your “testimony” using verses 3 – 11 as your guide? God knows your heart and your desires, so you can confess to Him your failures and your faith. It's the path to progress and joy.

Specific Goal -

What specific changes do you need to make in your priorities, schedule, activities, so that you can know Christ better?

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Lesson 7

Pressing On

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“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”

Philippians 3: 12

Not long ago a friend actually said, “It really doesn’t matter if the preacher is good at church or not because at my age I have heard it all already”. Apparently he is quite satisfied with his “Christian life”. It was a startling statement. Where would this kind of attitude come from? Is it legitimate at a certain age or stage in life? Or is there always more to learn of Christ? Are there always more ways to grasp what Jesus has in mind for us? What is the goal of your life?

READ – Philippians 3: 12 – 3: 21

Take time to read and re-read these verses each day this week. Write a summary of his thoughts in this section.

REFLECT

1. The race is not one of competition – to be first, but more of a cooperative treasure hunt – “laying hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of me”. Why did Jesus choose you to be one of His followers/disciples?
Acts 22: 12 – 16
Ephesians 1: 4 - 6
Ephesians 2: 8 – 10
Titus 2: 14
II Thessalonians 1: 11 - 12
Philemon 1: 4 - 7
2. Paul did not want to look back and keep track of his accomplishments or his failures, for either one of them could easily become a distraction to him. What happens when a runner looks in any direction except towards the goal? What was the motivation behind his singular focus?
3. Be careful whom you follow! It would seem that there are people in the church whose behavior would indicate that the “here and now” is more important to them than any future goal. (Colossians 3: 1 – 17) How serious is his warning for you and me?
4. In our culture millions, maybe billions, of dollars are spent each year on “transforming our bodies” – a temporary solution. Isn’t it wonderful to contemplate what God has in store for His children?
I Corinthians 15 : 51 – 57
I John 3: 2 – 3
Revelation 21: 3 – 4

RESPOND

Who marches in the “parade of faith” that you are walking in? In other words, who are the people that you follow as your models, mentors, spiritual guides, as you seek to glorify God? Another very important question to ask yourself is “who is following you, thinking that you are leading them on the right path?” What do you need from God – focus, vision, courage, energy, clarity?

Specific Goal -

What might be distracting you from making progress toward your goal? What do you need to change or do in order to eliminate those things which are impeding your progress or limiting your joy?

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Lesson 8

Remember

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**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”** Philippians 4: 6

When your child is ready to run out the door to go to school or out to play, there is often the need or desire to give him/her a few short instructions – “Be careful. Wear your sweater – it’s cold out. Come home on time.” A wise child will listen to those reminders and a wise parent will limit them to the very most important things. A wise parent might also add a word of encouragement or a promise as an incentive to be sure that the child remembers to do the most important task. Take your time as you read Paul’s final words of encouragement to his dearly loved children in the faith.

READ - Philippians 4: 1 – 7 Re-write this short section in your own words. Memorize verses 6 – 7 this week.

REFLECT

#1 – Stand firm or Stand fast in the Lord! What does it mean?

I Corinthians 15: 58

I Corinthians 16: 13

Galatians 5: 1

Ephesians 6: 11 – 14

Philippians 1: 27

Colossians 4: 12

II Thessalonians 2: 15

#2 – Settle Your Differences or Disagreements!

Evidently Euodia, which means “sweet smell”, and Syntyche, which means “friendly”, need some help.

They are believers and evidently in the 20% of the church that does 80% of the work, but they don’t get along with each other. What might be some of the reasons for their problems? Why would Paul ask the group to be helpful in addition to challenging the 2 women to find agreement?

#3 – Rejoice! Celebrate God all day, every day!

What helps you to rejoice? John 15: 9 – 11

Romans 12: 12

Romans 15: 13

Galatians 5: 22

Colossians 1: 10 - 13

#4 – Have a gentle spirit! To help you understand this, try reading various translations and the dictionary.

Would your friends say you were a “gentle” person? How about your family?

(Remember it’s an attitude, not a personality trait – or is it?)

#5 – Don’t worry! Pray! - and the peace of God will guard your heart and your mind! It’s a huge incentive.

What is making you feel anxious today? What keeps you from trading it in for some peace of mind?

RESPOND

All 5 of these reminders are actually counter-cultural. Think about it for a while. It shouldn’t surprise us because the Kingdom of God is totally opposite from the world that we live in right now. That’s exactly why we need these reminders. As children of God we can demonstrate by the way we live the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Specific Goal -

Is your heart’s desire to make progress and experience joy in your faith? Then what decision do you need to make? What change do you want to willingly accept? God is at work in you to enable you! Will you allow Him to do so?

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Lesson 9

Put Into Practice

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**“And my God shall supply all your need
according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4: 19**

It's not a coincidence that what we think about, contentment, and generosity are all linked together as Paul concludes his “thank you letter” to the Philippians. Isn't it true that what we think in the secret places of our mind determines how we will behave? If you truly think that you have everything that you NEED at the present moment and that when you have a need, God will supply it, then you can learn to be content, truly content. Furthermore, if you think about through whom and where God has blessed you and is blessing others, then generosity will be your life style. God will actually reward you as you are used by Him to meet the needs of others. It's a win-win way to live.

READ - Philippians 4: 8 – 23

Read it out loud. Have you copied this whole letter either by typing or writing it out? You still could do so . . .

REFLECT

1. As the old saying goes, “You can't stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from nesting there.” What fills your mind throughout the minutes and hours of your day? Contrast the adjectives given in verses 8 with an opposite word and then you can evaluate when the God of peace will be able to make His presence known to you and when He cannot do so.
2. Contentment – it's a very comfortable and inviting concept, isn't it? Try to define it in your own words. What are some of the convictions that you must have from Scripture if you want to learn how to be content? Make a list of them and ponder the ones which you consider to be the 3 most important.
3. Why is Paul so thankful for the generosity of the believers in Philippi? Review the story of the beginning of the church at Philippi - Acts 16. What do you think motivated them to faithful generosity through the years?
Matthew 6: 19 – 21
Luke 6: 38
4. Has God ever failed to supply your needs? Sometimes it can *feel* like it if we are willing to be honest. Think of some examples of when He has generously supplied your need – over and above – but certainly not in any way that you could have predicted or anticipated. (Remember that Paul was in jail when he wrote this.) There is a great promise in Jeremiah 29: 11 – 14. Does it help you understand or accept this truth in any way?

RESPOND

Struggle with your thought life? Listen to God's Spirit and His desire to enable you to fill your mind with His thoughts. Struggle with contentment – wanting, comparing, wishing, holding on to, complaining?

Listen to God's Spirit and His desire to meet your need. What promises do you need to remember?

Struggle with generosity - who really NEEDS your time or your resources more than you do?

Look for people and ministries that God has used in your own life or those which are close to your interests.

Listen to God. Your generosity will be a “sweet-smelling aroma”, well pleasing to Him.

Specific Goal – Why postpone “progress and joy in your faith” because of indecision?

Who will be your encourager and who needs your encouragement? Both of these are very important in any race!