



**FLOURISH
BIBLE STUDY**

PHILIPPIANS

LEADER'S GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO PHILIPPIANS

At this first meeting, you'll want to cover the setting of the letter—who wrote it and to whom, when it was written, and the primary themes. A primary theme in Philippians is *joy*, so it'll be encouraging to spend some time discussing joy—what it is and isn't, the source of joy (perhaps bring in Galatians 5:22–23), hindrances to joy, and personal experiences of joy. The apostle Paul shows us in Philippians that joy is not dependent on circumstances. Be sure to include this in your discussion.

WEEK 1: FROM THE FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW

PHILIPPIANS 1:1–11

Be sure to cover the backstory of Philippians by reviewing Acts 16:6–15. The Acts passage gives us some insight into the bond Paul has with the believers at Philippi and how that bond was forged. Knowing the origins of this bond deepens our grasp of the importance of forming our own bonds with fellow believers. Be sure to cover the sort of love Paul prays for in verses 9–11 and the qualities that go into this love, specifically *knowledge* and *discernment*. Discuss how these qualities are manifested in day-to-day life.

WEEK 2: TO LIVE IS CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 1:12–26

The most important takeaway this week is the “What do you live for?” question that springs from Paul's words in 1:21: “For me to live is Christ.” It'll come again at the end of the study, when you discuss week 10. The topic of suffering can be tied into the “reason for living” conversation—the painful things that happen to us serve a greater purpose (God's purpose). Are we willing to suffer if God so wills and if it can be used for kingdom purposes? Or do we fight against it by blaming God and turning away from him in unbelief? Be sure to touch on how Paul responded to self-centered, competitive preachers. Although his focus here is on gospel preachers, the lesson takes you to some passages that consider blatantly false preachers—those who have a veneer of spiritual truth but actually don't preach spiritual truth.



WEEK 3: STANDING FIRM

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

Discuss why unity among believers is an important aspect of living the sort of “worthy” life Paul outlines for us. It would be good to distinguish between healthy disagreement and sinful disunity. When is disagreement or confrontation actually good and helpful? Be sure to spend time reviewing Acts 16:16–40 and discussing the application Paul makes from that experience.

WEEK 4: GROWING TOGETHER

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

The primary focus this week is verses 5–11, a beautiful portrait of Jesus. Discuss its significance and why Paul includes it here—how does this portrait fit with what Paul is teaching the Philippians? Spend some time discussing what is said about Jesus in each of these verses (6–11). You might want to take time to look up some cross-references to this passage, such as Isaiah 53:1–12; Matthew 20:27–28; John 10:17–18; Hebrews 5:7–9.

WEEK 5: LIGHTING UP THE WORLD

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

A housekeeping note for Week 5: there are a couple of typos in the first question on page 59, which should read as follows (corrected portion highlighted for you):

In verse 14 Paul insists that his believing friends live their lives without grumbling, complaining, or engaging in deliberate controversy. Our words—our conversations—present a significant testimony of what we truly believe about the Lord. Paul also talked about grumbling in his first letter to the Corinthian church. In that letter he reminded believers of what happened to the Israelites centuries before when they’d complained about their circumstances. Take a glance at **a part of** that story, first the original in Numbers 14:1–12, 26–37 and then the recap in 1 Corinthians 10:1–10. **How do these passages reveal that** grumbling words are such a big deal?

This is the week to focus on how Christian growth happens—we work out what God works in. Perhaps talk about some common misunderstandings of this process such as “Let go and let God,” or “God helps those who help themselves.” You’ll want to be sure



WEEK 5 (CONTINUED)

that the group understands that Paul’s words in verses 12–13 aren’t about “balance”—God does his part if we do our part. In other words, the point to emphasize is that once we are united to Christ by faith—in union with him for eternity—we are transformed from the inside out (Romans 8:28–30) and therefore able to live obedient lives. That’s why Paul commands us to work out what the Lord works in—he wouldn’t command it unless we are able, and we are able because the Holy Spirit indwells us.

WEEK 6: A COUPLE OF GODLY FRIENDS

PHILIPPIANS 2:19–30

You’ll want to at least touch on the background of Timothy, reading together Acts 16:1–3. Be sure your group understands the significance of Timothy’s circumcision. If anyone isn’t clear, take some time to go over Genesis 17:9–14. You’ll want to focus on how Timothy and Epaphroditus impacted Paul and his ministry, and what we learn from their example about how to build others up.

WEEK 7: GAIN AND LOSS

PHILIPPIANS 3:1–11

Talk about the impressions you get from tracing the theme of joy and rejoicing through the letter. Reflect on how the study is changing the way the group thinks about joy and rejoicing. Vitally important to cover this week is the true nature of salvation offered in the gospel—we are saved by Jesus Christ and his death on the cross. You might want to talk about the sort of things that can tempt us to put “confidence in the flesh.” This week we learn that before his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee. Be sure everyone understands who the Pharisees were and how their beliefs were a denial of the gospel. (The Pharisees were a Jewish sect that upheld meticulous observance of God’s law and their own narrow interpretations of it as the way to earn favor with God.)



WEEK 8: ONWARD AND UPWARD

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1

The emphasis this week is on spiritual growth. Touch on the reality that we are always in spiritual motion, either forward or backward—there is no standing still, no fence-sitting, in the Christian life. You'll want to cover the role our thoughts play in deepening discipleship and how our thoughts are shaped by what we focus on. Imitation plays an important part as well. You can have a good discussion about the sort of people who attract us and why—are we attracted to (and therefore seek to imitate) worldly qualities or godly ones?

WEEK 9: CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-9

The theme of unity comes front and center again here as we look at Paul's exhortation about Euodia and Syntyche. For the sake of unity, we need to set aside our disagreements. That being said, there are circumstances in which holding to unity isn't the right approach. A good point of discussion is how to discern the difference. Explain the difference between primary issues and secondary issues. Primary issues concern the gospel (salvation by Christ alone through faith alone to the glory of God) and the inerrancy of Scripture. Secondary issues are those where more than one interpretation of a biblical issue is possible, such as mode of baptism or view of the end times. Even in those instances where unity isn't possible, disunity should be handled with gentleness of the sort Paul names. You might want to touch on what this might look like practically. Also, be sure to include time in your discussion to cover the principles of prayer that come from this week's passage.



WEEK 10: THE GOD WHO PROVIDES

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

We cover two verses in this week's lesson that are sometimes taken out of context and misapplied: verses 13 and 19. In verse 13 Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." And in verse 19 he says, "My God will supply every need of yours in Christ Jesus." Be sure the group understands not only the right context for how to understand and apply these two verses, but also the importance of interpreting any Bible passage in context. When you get to the third "Let's Talk" question—"What do you live for?"—have the group look back on how they answered the question when it was asked during week 2. Has anyone's answer changed over these weeks? Definitely leave time to cover the fourth "Let's Talk" question, which aims to set Philippians in the overall storyline of Scripture.