

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #1
Philippians intro + 1:1-2 – lead up to Feb 4th

The big picture

1. Before reading the letter together as a group, take a few minutes to share together your current perception of Paul's letter to the Philippians
 - What is Philippians all about?
 - What relevance do we think this letter has to our lives?
 - What portions of this letter have been significant for us?

2. Read the whole letter as a group and then reflect together on the themes and refrains that stand out to you.
 - What passages or themes catch our attention?
 - How do these passages and themes intersect with our lives?

3. In the light of your reading and discussion, what would you now say is the heart of this letter? How has your perception of this letter or any of its themes changed?

Read Philippians 1:1-2

4. Flip to one or two other of Paul's letters and read his opening remarks, and then read Paul's opening remarks in his letter to the Philippians.
 - What stands out to you in Paul's opening remarks to the Philippians?
 - What do these unique aspects suggest?

5. Note that Paul refers to Timothy and himself as "servants" of Christ Jesus (the word can equally be translated "slaves"), and that he says this while in prison.
 - How do you view yourself fundamentally in regard to Christ?
 - How do you think this shapes or impacts your life and prayers?

 - *Deeper: Who or what do you sometimes feel enslaved to or by?*
 - What difference does it make to understand yourself as a servant of Christ (as opposed to something or someone else)?

PRAY: *Take a few minutes to pray for one another and for our church in the light of what you've shared.*

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #2
Philippians 1:3-11 – lead up to Feb 11th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group (including v.1-2) twice – first, imagining Paul in prison writing to the Philippian Church, and second, as though addressed to us.
 - What thoughts, insights and feelings stir in you as you hear Paul’s words?

2. Paul’s opening remarks to the Philippian church are bursting with emotion.
 - What feelings does Paul express and why does Paul feel this way?
 - Paul refers to experiencing “the affection of Christ Jesus” for them.
 - Have you ever felt that you’ve experienced something of this? Explain

3. In the Christian community, we often put a lot of emphasis on orthodoxy (right thinking/beliefs). Paul himself cares deeply about right thinking (his letters are a testament to this). But this letter invites us to consider how the gospel impacts and transforms our *affections* – feelings, desires, joys.
 - What role do your affections play in your life with God?
 - Do you ever pray about your affections? Why and how?

4. In this passage, Paul speaks of **joy** for the first time; a theme he comes back to constantly throughout this letter.
 - What role does joy play in your life with God? (Conversely, what role does sorrow play in your life with God?)
 - What are some of the deep sources of joy in your life, and how does Jesus play into these?

5. Close by lingering on Paul’s prayer (v.9-11).
 - What all does Paul pray for and how do the parts relate to one another?
 - What of this prayer feels most needed in your life?

PRAY: *Take the rest of your time to pray this prayer (1:9-11) for one another and for our church. Let the themes of Paul’s prayer guide you in praying in personal ways.*

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #3
Philippians 1:12-30 – lead up to Feb 18th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group with an ear toward what has happened to Paul and his response to it all.
 - What has happened to Paul?
 - How are others responding to what has happened to Paul?
 - How is Paul responding?
 - Personalize: *How is Paul's response an encouragement, challenge or otherwise to you?*

2. Read again v.15-18 and consider Paul's views on motive vs. message in regard to witnessing to the gospel.
 - When it comes to the gospel being preached, which does Paul value more – motive or message? And why is this?
 - Personalize: *Which do we value more and why?*
 - *Are motives everything? Is the message everything?*

3. Read again Paul's famous words in v.21 – "*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" and the rest of this passage (v.18b-28).
 - How do you respond to Paul's view of his own life and death?
 - What parts of this passage can you say wholeheartedly and what parts are not true of you right now?
[PRAY: *take some time to pray about this together.*]

4. Come again to v.27-30 and consider together Paul's instructions here to the church.
 - First, what are his instructions?
 - Second, what would it mean to live this out?
 - In what ways do Paul's words encourage or challenge us?

PRAY: *Take the rest of your time to pray for one another in the light of what has been shared. Pray for the fruitful proclamation of the gospel and for God to use the hardships we face as the means of His sovereign purposes.*

[note that there is no study provided for next week]

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #4
Philippians 2:1-11 – lead up to March 4th

1. Read the whole passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the overarching concern that Paul is addressing here.
 - What seems to be going on in this Philippians church that Paul is confronting here?
2. This chapter begins with the words “*Therefore*” (2:1).
 - Take a moment together to remember together what Paul has already said (i.e. What is Paul speaking now in the light of?).
3. Note Paul’s call to unity in Philippians 2:2f.
 - What does this unity entail and how does this strike you?
 - How do we make sense of this call to be “like-minded” in our age of unity and diversity?
4. Reflect together on the beautiful ideal of Christian community Paul describes in 2:2-8.
 - Where have we experienced something of this and what impact did it have?
 - Where have we experienced this in the life of our church life? Or the absence of this?
 - Where have we failed? And in what ways has we grown in this?
5. What relationship(s) in our lives most need us to grow in this Philippians 2 way of living? This Jesus-way of living?

PRAY: Where helpful, split into small huddles, and take the rest of the time to pray together for one another, for our church and for the Christian community at large in the light of all that has been shared.

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #5
Philippians 2:12-18 – lead up to March 11th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - What verses, words or statements most grab your attention and why?
2. Like last week, this passage begins with the words “Therefore” (2:12).
 - Take a moment together to remember together what Paul has already said (i.e. What is Paul speaking now in the light of?).
 - Why does this “*therefore*” matter for what Paul is now stating?
3. In 2:12, Paul instructs the Philippian Christians to “work out your salvation”.
 - What does this mean and look like in practice?
 - *Personalize*: How are you seeking to work out your salvation in this season of your life?
4. Consider Paul’s instruction to do so with “fear and trembling”.
 - What role does “fear and trembling” play in a life of grace?
 - *Personalize*: What role has it or does it play in your life?
5. Read 2:14-18 again with an ear to Paul’s “*so that*”.
 - What is the goal of Paul’s instruction here? (i.e. “so that *what?*”)
 - *Personalize*: How much are we compelled and captivated by this same goal? Why is this?
6. If anyone has reason to “grumble”, Paul did. And yet throughout this letter, we catch glimpses of his deep and abiding joy.
 - How do you make sense of this reality in Paul’s life?
 - How does the gospel bring joy in the midst of suffering and trials?

PRAY: Where helpful, split into small huddles, and take the rest of the time to pray together for one another, for our church and for the Christian community at large in the light of all that has been shared.

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #6
Philippians 2:19-3:1a – lead up to March 18th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - a. What verses, words or ideas most grab your attention and why?

2. Of his entire letter to the Philippian Christians, this section is far from conceptual. Here Paul honors and thanks God for two particular people – Timothy and Epaphroditus – whose life of faith is a blessing to Paul and the Philippians.
 - a. If you were to write a letter to honor and thank God for two people who's life of faith has been a blessing to you, who would you name and why?

3. [**ACTION**: pause and send a text right now to express your simple thanks for the faith example of another. Why not?]

4. Recognizing that God uses all of us, for whom are **you** seeking to model a life in Christ?
 - a. How are you seeking to model life in Christ?

5. [**PRAY**: stop and pray together for those you just mentioned and for your presence and influence in their lives.]

6. We often view our life and growth in Christ as something that weighs solely on our shoulders. As we are discovering, in Paul's writings, we see something different – *the life of faith sustained by the community of faith*.
 - a. How did Paul experience and contribute to this?
 - b. How do you think **you** are experiencing and contributing to this?
 - c. What hinders you from experiencing and contributing more to the community of faith?

PRAY: Take the rest of the time to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of all that has been shared.

[note that there is no study provided for next week]

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #7
Philippians 3:1-11 – lead up to April 1st (Easter)

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - What verses, words or ideas most grab your attention and why?

2. In v.2, Paul warns the Philippians about “those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.” As we continue reading, it becomes evident that he is referring to the Judaizers in this way – Jewish followers of Jesus who were adamant that all followers of Jesus must also embrace the rituals and demands of Jewish faith.
 - How, according to Paul, is this way of thinking a rejection of the gospel?
 - Where do we encounter or experience similar voice/perspectives in our day?
 - What makes these voices so compelling at times? And what keeps us from feeling the need to follow their “Jesus plus” agenda?

3. Consider Paul’s discussion here of gains and losses. Read v.4b-9 together.
 - Consider the seven sources of false confidence (ritual, ethnicity, rank, tradition, religious rule-keeping, zeal, and obedience to the law). Which source is most enticing to you? Why?
 - What are some “gains” in your life that you’ve come to see as losses? (i.e. treasures, gifts or capacities that have ended up getting in the way of your coming hands-open to God.)

 - What has convinced you of the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus”? (think experiences, relationships, influences)

 - How can we help one another keep this vision and passion – of the surpassing worth of Jesus – at the forefront of our lives?
 - *What helps you? What would help you?*

PRAY: Take the rest of the time to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of all that has been shared.

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #8
Philippians 3:12-4:1 – lead up to May 6th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - What verses, words or ideas most grab your attention and why?
 - What in this passage is an encouragement or challenge to you and why?

[This passage is rooted in what Paul has previously written. We hear this in the opening line when he refers to “*obtaining all this*” (NIV) – which assumes that we know what “*all this*” is. Take a moment to recall together what Paul is talking about...]

2. In vs.12-14, Paul talks about his pursuit of Christ (“*pressing on to take hold...*”) and Christ’s pursuit of him (“*Christ Jesus took hold of me*”).
 - Which pursuit most dominates **your** relationship with God? Which most dominates your thoughts, prayers and imagination?
 - And what difference does this make? (note: they both matter)
3. In v.18, Paul refers to those who “*live/walk as enemies of the cross of Christ*”.
 - What did Paul mean by this? What did this look like in his day, and what does it look like today?
 - What are the ways we are tempted to “*live/walk as enemies of the cross of Christ*”? To deny the call to follow the Crucified One?
4. In vs.19-21, Paul talks about the end or destiny of those who are enemies of the cross of Christ and of those whose hope is in the Crucified One.
 - Unpack the particulars of what Paul says about each.
 - What in this do you need to hear and why? What do you need to fix your mind on?

PRAY: Take the rest of the time to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of all that has been shared.

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #9
Philippians 4:2-9 – lead up to May 13th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - What verses, words or ideas most grab your attention and why?
 - What in this passage is an encouragement or challenge to you and why?

2. In v.2-3, Paul gets really personal and speaks directly to two members of the Philippian congregation, pleading with them to seek unity in heart and mind.
 - In reading this address to others, does anyone come to mind within the life of the church (Lambrick and beyond) that God is inviting, even pleading for you to seek reconciliation – unity of heart and mind?
 - Take some time as a group and pray for one another in this regard.

3. In v.6-7, Paul talks about anxiety, prayer, and the peace of God.
 - Can you think of an experience of anxiety where God gave you a peace that transcended understanding?

 - What are you anxious about these days?
 - Spend some time sharing with one another and praying together.

4. In v.8, Paul instructs us to focus our minds on “*whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable...*”
 - How seriously do we take this instruction in our own lives?
 - What does this look like in the midst of a world captivated with the inane, the untrue, the perverse, and the distorted?
 - How do or can we do this? How can we help one another in pursuit?

PRAY: Take the rest of the time to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of all that has been shared. -----

Partners in Christ
Philippians study guide #10
Philippians 4:10-23 – lead up to May 20th

1. Read the passage aloud as a group in a few different translations – with an ear to the heart of what Paul is saying in this passage.
 - What verses, words or ideas most grab your attention and why?

2. In this final portion of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we catch a glimpse of Paul’s vision of spirituality – it involves real needs, real money, and real people doing real things to care for one another.
 - What are the real challenges of your life that you don't often think to bring to God in prayer or to share in a group like this, and why?
 - How does this passage encourage or challenge you?

3. Paul talks here about contentment – something that we all grapple with at times, if not often, on many fronts. Read v.10-13 again together.
 - In what aspects of your life have you learned to be content, and in what things do you struggle to be content?
 - What difference does the gospel make in all this?

4. In v.19, Paul states with confidence that God will meet all their needs according to the riches of his glory in Jesus Christ.
 - What does Paul seem to mean by this?
 - What are the “glorious riches” Paul refers to?
 - And how can we claim this when many live in want (including many who trust God)?

→ Finally, reflecting back on our study in Philippians, what has been the most significant verse, passage or theme for you? What from our study in Philippians do you most need to hold onto or live more deeply into?

PRAY: Take the rest of the time to pray together for one another and for our church in the light of all that has been shared.
