

Community Groups |

Growing UP | Growing WITH | Growing OUT



"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching." – Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

Why Community Groups?

Because God created us to live life in the context of relationships! This is an opportunity for you to connect with others as your experience real life-change in your Christian walk.

What is a Community Group?

A group of 6-10 people who "do life" together as they grow in their love for God, His word, and others. Community Groups encourage folks to take their "next step" in three areas: (1) **Spiritual Growth – UP** to God, (2) **Relational Growth – WITH** Group members, and (3) **Missional Growth – OUT** to those in the church and world.

Thus, a Community Group is an environment where we are conformed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:29-30*). Our conviction is that "real life-change only happens in the context of biblical community."

Not to be left out is the fact that a Community Group is also a place for folks to have fun as they celebrate and share life together! Come join us!

Our journey begins with a six-week study of the book of *Philippians*. The following Study Guide is intended to immerse you into God's word while you grow closer to Him in the context of relationships.

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Study One | **Philippians 1:1-11**

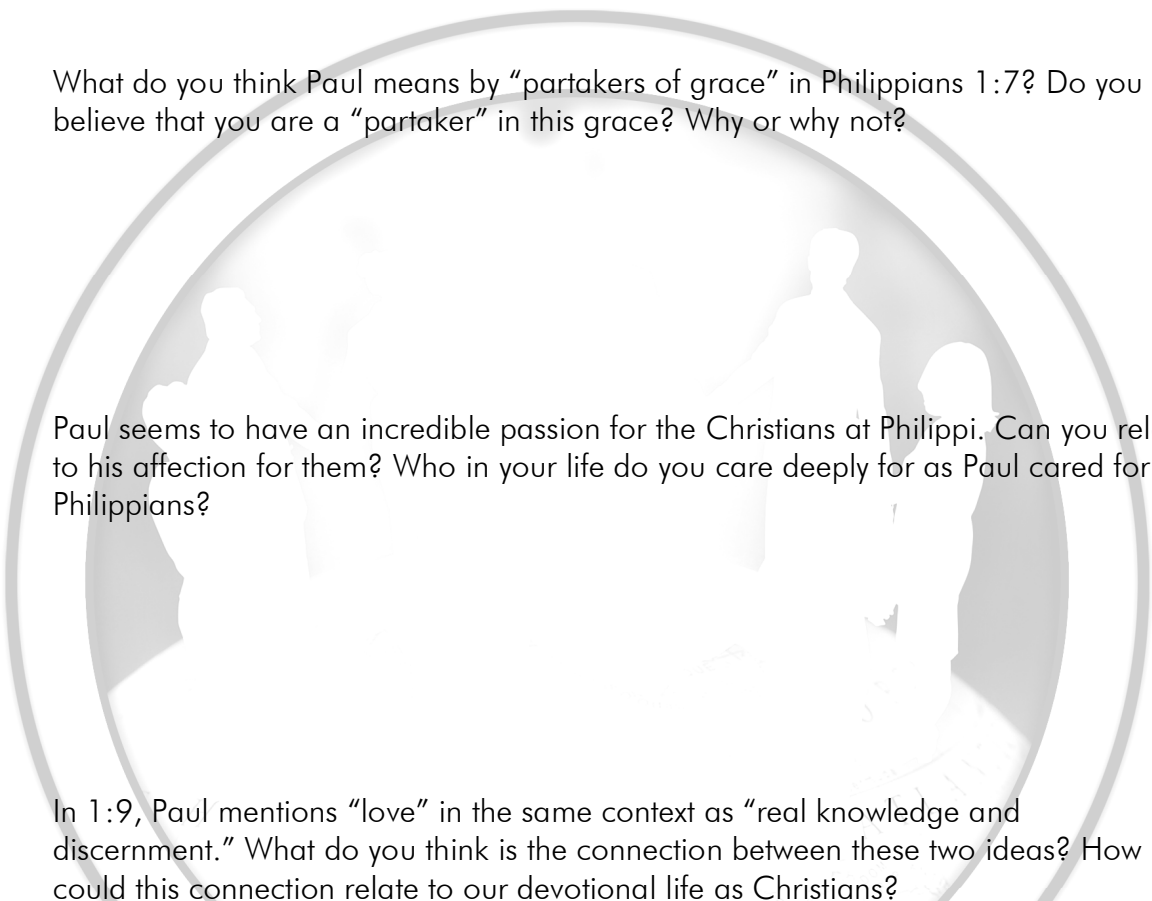
Background

Author: The Apostle Paul

Date written: 61-62 AD

Written from: Rome during house arrest (*Philippians 1:13; Acts 28:16, 30-31*) as a joyful exhortation to the Church at Philippi (founded in 50-51 AD during Paul's Second Missionary Journey; *Acts 16:11-12*).

1. What does it mean to be a "servant" or "bond-servant?" (1:1) Is this a good or bad thing? (Read *Galatians 1:10* and *Romans 6:17-18*) How does our desire to seek the favor of men conflict with our ability to serve as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ?
2. Paul addresses this epistle (letter) to the "saints in Christ Jesus." (1:1). How would you describe a "saint?" Do you view yourself as a "saint?" Why or why not? (Read *Romans 6:3-4, Romans 8:1, and Ephesians 2:10*)
3. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you." (1:3). It must have brought great joy to the Philippians' hearts as they read these words from Paul (Read *Ephesians 1:15-17* and *Colossians 1:9-10*). When do we bring similar joy to other's hearts?

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4. In Philippians 1:6, Paul wanted to build up the confidence of the Philippians. What is this “good work” to which he is referring here? What does it mean to “perfect it” (NASB) or to “carry it onto completion?” (NIV) Does this give you confidence today as a follower of Jesus Christ?
 5. What do you think Paul means by “partakers of grace” in Philippians 1:7? Do you believe that you are a “partaker” in this grace? Why or why not?
 6. Paul seems to have an incredible passion for the Christians at Philippi. Can you relate to his affection for them? Who in your life do you care deeply for as Paul cared for the Philippians?
 7. In 1:9, Paul mentions “love” in the same context as “real knowledge and discernment.” What do you think is the connection between these two ideas? How could this connection relate to our devotional life as Christians?

Memory verses:

Philippians 1:3 – *“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.”*

Philippians 1:6 – *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

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Study Two | **Philippians 1:12-30**

1. Why do you think Paul's imprisonment (or house arrest, Read Acts 30-31) allowed for the "greater progress of the gospel?" (1:12). Has God ever used persecution in your life to further His message to others?
2. Does Paul agree that it is fine for some people to preach the gospel for selfish gain? (1:15-18) What do you make of this? Do we see this selfish proclamation of the gospel in our culture today?
3. What does Paul mean when he says in Philippians 1:21 that "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain?*" Can you really say that you embrace the same perspective? Why or why not?
4. Can you relate to Paul's struggle in 1:23-26? Do you ever yearn for eternity to come so that you can "be with Christ?"

5. What does it mean to conduct ourselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ?” (1:27) Are you doing this? Where do you struggle to conduct yourself in this way?

6. Paul mentions in 1:27 that the Philippians should stand firm “in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Why do you think Paul emphasizes unity so much here? What do you think the application is for us in the church today? (See *Romans 12:10-16*)

7. What does Paul mean by suffering for the sake of Christ? Do you experience this suffering now or have you experienced it at any point in your life?

Memory verses:

Philippians 1:21 – *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Philippians 1:27 – *“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”*

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Study Three | **Philippians 2:1-16**

1. Do you think it's possible to "do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit?" (2:3, NASB) If not, then what is Paul's purpose for writing this command? How should we respond?
2. Humility is one of the key qualities of the Christian life. How does the Apostle Paul describe humility in 2:3-4? Why do you think this is so important for us to embrace? What makes humility so difficult to embrace if it's so important?
3. Verses 5 through 11 are called the "Kenosis" (from the Greek word meaning "to empty," see 2:7). Considering what we know about Jesus Christ from this passage, what makes His choice to humbly "empty" Himself so incredible? How does this impact you?
4. Philippians 2:12 and 2:13 appear to contradict each other. Are we "working out" our salvation (2:12) or is God (2:13)? What do you make of this? How are we to reconcile these verses, if at all? (Read *1 Corinthians 15:10* and *Philippians 1:6*)

5. In what area of your life do you find yourself “grumbling” (NASB) or “complaining” (NIV)? Why is it so important not to grumble or complain? (2:15-16)

6. What does Paul mean when he says that the Philippians are “lights” in the world? (2:15) What are the implications for us in the 21st century? How brightly are you shining as a “light” to our broken and lost world?

7. How can we as a group reach out to our community and “shine brightly” before others who do not know the Savior?

Memory verses:

Philippians 2:3 – *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”*

Philippians 2:12-13 – *“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling (13) for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work or His good pleasure.”*

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Study Four | **Philippians 2:17-30**

1. What does Paul mean when he says that he is “being poured out as a drink offering” in 2:17? What imagery does this bring to mind? (Read *Numbers 28:7*, *Romans 15:15-16*, and *2 Timothy 4:6*)

2. What purpose would sending Timothy to the Philippians serve? What was Paul’s relationship or history with Timothy? (Read *Acts 16:1-2* and *1 Timothy 1:1-2*).

3. What sort of encouragement do you think the Philippians felt when they knew that Paul was sending Timothy to them? (2:20) Do you have anyone in your life who is genuinely concerned about your welfare as Timothy was for the Philippians?

4. Paul describes Epaphroditus as his “brother,” “fellow worker,” and “fellow soldier” (2:25). What does this communicate to you about nature of ministry and those you serve alongside?

5. How does the Philippians' and Paul's model of compassion for Epaphroditus during his sickness (2:26-27) serve as an example for us? Why do you think it is a challenge for us to feel this sort of compassion and concern at times?

6. Do you know of someone who has come "close to death for the work of Christ?" (2:30) If so, describe their story. How has their experience either inspired or convicted you in your service for the Savior?

7. What steps can you take (or can we as an entire group take) to more courageously carry out God's Kingdom work here on earth? Are we willing to do it?

Memory verse:

Philippians 2:17-18 – *"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. (18) You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me."*

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Study Five | **Philippians 3:1-21**

1. Why do you think Paul makes a distinction between “false circumcision” and “true circumcision” in Philippians 3:2 and 3? Who were these “dogs” to which he was referring? (Read also *Galatians 2:4* and *Titus 1:10-11*)
2. What does Paul mean by “confidence in the flesh?” (3:3-4) Where do you struggle by putting “confidence in the flesh?”
3. Paul very strongly denounces the things in which he used to place his confidence (3:7-8). Why does he do this? What is of the utmost importance to Paul? Can you say the same is true in your life?
4. What does Paul refer to when he writes about knowing Christ “and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings?” (3:10) How did Paul hope to be “conformed to His death?” What is Paul’s outstanding hope in 3:11?

5. How does Paul's perspective of his spiritual progress (also known as *sanctification*) encourage you as you struggle to "press on toward the goal?" (3:12-14) If Paul readily admitted to not having arrived, what should our attitude be towards our own spiritual growth?

6. Who are these people that Paul describes in Philippians 3:18 and 19 as "enemies of the cross of Christ?" What do you think the connection is between setting one's mind on "earthly things" and being an "enemy of the cross of Christ?"

7. Philippians 3:20 and 21 gives us an incredible message of hope! What kinds of things should we hope for as a result of these verses? What do you think about when you think about the resurrection? What will it be like? (Read *1 Corinthians 15:50-53*) How, if at all, does the resurrection bring you hope in the midst of your current circumstances?

Memory verses:

Philippians 3:7 – *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."*

Philippians 3:14 – *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"*

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Study Six | **Philippians 4:1–23**

1. Paul refers to the Philippian Christians as his “joy and crown.” (4:1). Do you have anyone in your life who is your “joy and crown?” How are you encouraging them to “stand firm in the Lord?”
2. In 4:3, Paul mentions those “whose names are written in the book of life.” What is this book of life and whose names are written in it? (Read *Luke 10:20; Revelation 20:12* and *21:27*) As a Christian, you should be confident that your name is written in this book. Are you confident?
3. Philippians 4:6 and 7 give us some incredible wisdom. Describe any circumstances that over which you are experiencing anxiety. How difficult is it for you to deal well with the anxieties that you face? How are we to handle these anxieties and what is God’s promise to us when we handle them correctly? (Read *Matthew 6:25, 33-34*)
4. Paul uses several adjectives in 4:8, but what might these things look like in concrete, day-to-day Christian living? How do we “dwell on these things?” What would the opposite of these things look like?

5. What should we glean from these verses about contentment (4:11-13). What is this “secret” (4:12) and how can we learn it? (Read 2 Corinthians 9:8 and 1 Timothy 6:6) Where do you struggle in your life to maintain an attitude of contentedness? Where do we find the source of this contentedness? (4:13; also Read 2 Corinthians 12:9)

6. How does the Philippians’ generosity towards Paul (4:14-18) serve as a model for us today? Who are the people in and around our community who have needs? How can we practically meet them for the cause of Jesus Christ?

7. As Paul closes his letter to the Philippians, he is confident that God will provide for them. What does this provision look like? Is there an element of spiritual provision in addition to physical provision here? If so, what would this look like? Are you seeing this provision being met in your own life?

Memory verses:

Philippians 4:6-7 – *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

Philippians 4:19 – *“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*

Resources for Philippians | TBC

For further study of the book of Philippians, see the following Bible Study Resources:

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf>

<http://net.bible.org/bible.php?book=Phi&chapter>

Also listen to the following sermons from Topeka Bible Church:

“Resolutions and Regrets: How to Deal with Them?” (*Philippians 3:7-14*)

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http://www.topekabiblechurch.org/media/Resolutions_Regrets.mp3

