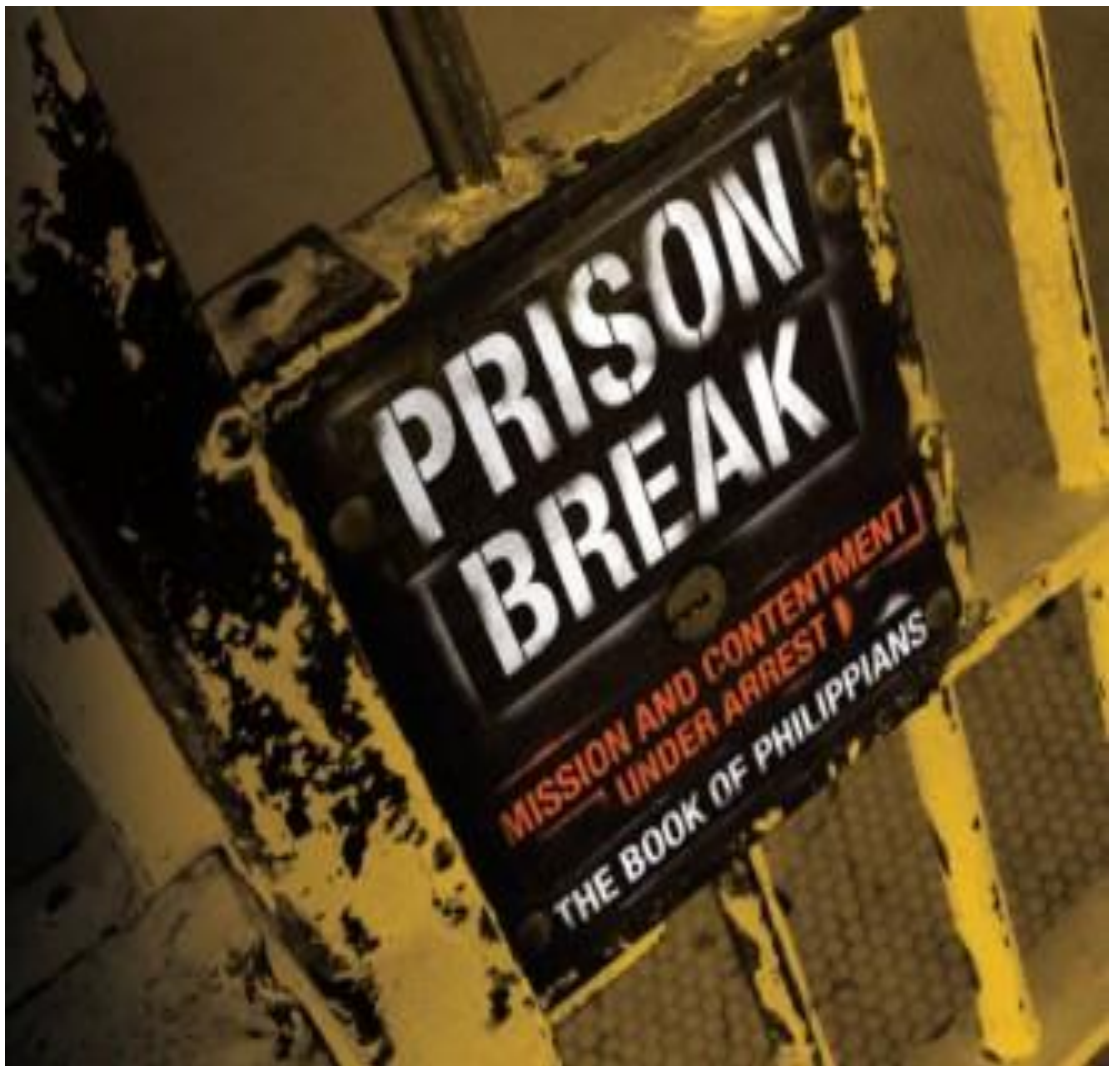


PHILIPPIANS



By Lynton Brocklehurst

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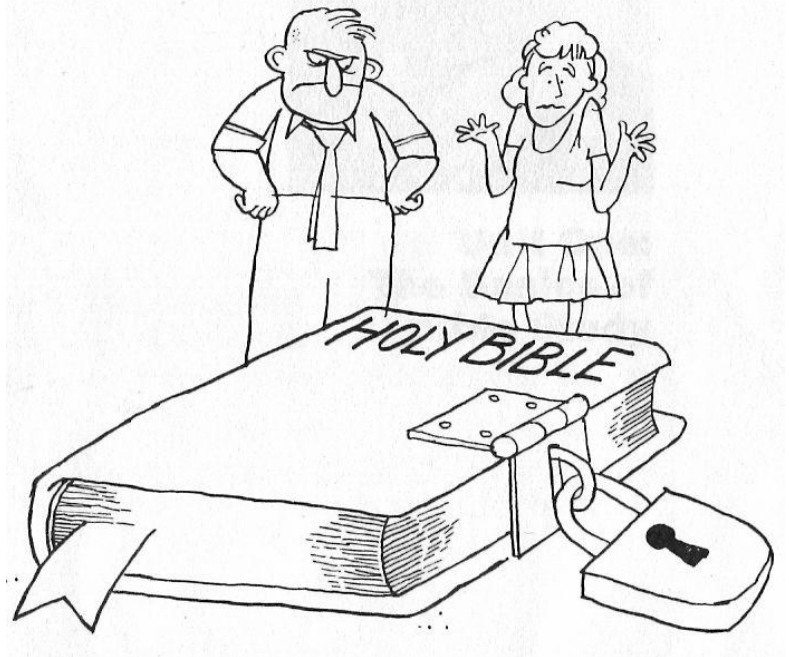
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OUR APPROACH TO PHILIPPIANS

Getting into the story

Many people can't get into the bible because they have the wrong approach. They think the bible is full of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. But the bible is not an *instruction manual*. It is a *story book* - full of amazing accounts of people discovering just how real God was in everyday life. The letter to Philippians is a window into one of the small stories that go to make up God's big story of the human race. It is a real letter written by an amazing man, from prison in Rome, to a bunch of full-on Jesus-followers in a Greek city in AD 61. It is about real people, e.g. Timothy ^{2:19}, Epharoditus ^{2:25}, with details about real situations. We even have the incidental mention of a couple of women who weren't getting on very well. ^{4:2-3}



The reason God has given us the bible in this form is that he wants it to be gutsy and real. He wants us to be inspired. He wants us to be involved in the big story of the human race, which just now happens to be our story. The Philippians had their day 2000 years ago. Now it's own turn. Letters like Philippians show us how to go about it, they stir our hearts. As we immerse ourselves in the Philippians' story and in Paul's story the Holy Spirit gets us excited about following Jesus in the little old Christchurch in 2008!

The fact that the bible is essentially *story* requires a different approach. We can't afford to be superficial. We have got to get beyond seizing onto a few random words and phrases here and there, lazily making them mean what we want them to mean. If we really want to be inspired we need to think deeply about what it was really like for those people back there. We need to honour God's intentions in giving us a letter about real people in real situations. It is all about taking their example seriously. Paul is very clear about this, even in the letter itself - "Join with others in following my example" ^{3:17}; "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice" ^{4:9}.



So our approach is to pick up the letter as if we have never seen it before, immerse ourselves in the story it is telling and see what the Holy Spirit shows us. This will be very exciting because not only has the Holy Spirit inspired the letter to the Philippians (2 Tim 3:16-17), he is here with us now to help us understand and apply it. (1 Cor 2:12).

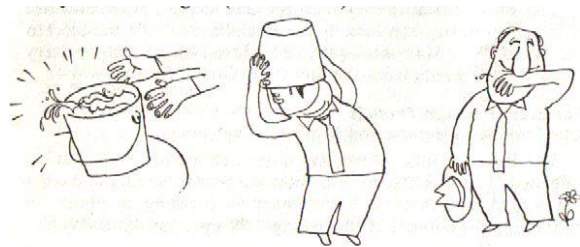
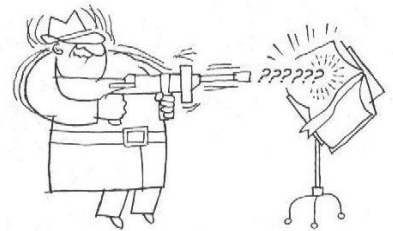
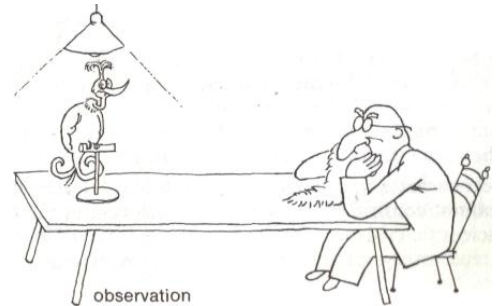
Convictions – not Opinions.

An opinion is something you hold. A conviction is something that holds you. The only way to get solid convictions is by doing your own thinking. So our method is built around doing our own thinking. This is not prescribed study with predetermined outcomes. This is open, original study. You get to figure things out yourself, together with your group and the help of the Holy Spirit. Very exciting!

To do this there are three things we need to become good at:

Observing, Interpreting and Responding

1. **Observing** –reading a passage for the first time it is easy to focus in on what we don't understand, what puzzles us, or what interests us. But this causes us to narrow in on a few things. It limits our ability to take in *all* that is being said. Observation asks the question, “**What is being said?**” It is the art of noticing and appreciating as much as possible in the passage, even the obvious things. It is amazing how much more we will see in a passage if we just take a little time.
2. **Interpreting** –once we have a good grasp of what is actually there we can focus on what it means. Interpretation asks the question, “**What does this mean?**” Or more particularly “What did this mean when it was written 2000 years ago?” One danger is that we move too quickly to “What does this mean to me?” (That comes later, in the “Responding” step). Here, in particular, we are trying to come to grips with things we don't understand. Interpretation involves *stating our questions*, gathering *information* and drawing *conclusions*.
3. **Responding** - here the questions are, “**What does this mean to me?**” “**What does this mean to us?**” Here we are tracking on the things that the Holy Spirit is stirring in us. This is the really exciting part because God is in the process of transforming us, making us more and more like Jesus in how we think, feel and act (2 Corinthians 3:18). In this step we need to identify where **we are** at present and where we believe God **wants us to be**.



For each study we will introduce some practical hints on how to go about this. You will find a full list of these ideas at the back of the booklet under Study Methods.

Good tangents!

Tangents are powerful. Nothing like a good tangent to spark up a discussion. Nothing quite as discouraging as a tangent that gets us completely sidetracked. Have you ever wondered why some tangents are incredibly helpful while others are incredibly frustrating? In our groups, I would suggest we have a good tangent when it *connects* what we are experiencing, observing or thinking with the passage we are discussing. It is good when the passage itself stimulates the tangent, when the amazing things we have been reading about get us thinking about things important to us personally. Tangents like this have a crucial role keeping things real. They prevent the discussion from becoming dry and theoretical.

We can also have bad tangents. Bad tangents occur when someone introduces an idea that is not very well connected to the passage-based discussion at all. It is snatched “out of the air”. It is even worse if it is not really that important or ‘personal’ to the one raising it, or if it has minimal relevance to the majority of the group.

Tangents have a crucial role in making powerful connections between the biblical story and our own stories. Ideally Tuesday nights should begin with us talking about Paul and the Philippians and what their lives were like, and end up with us talking about you and me and what our lives are like – and praying for one another.

Getting stuck

There will be times when we just can't seem to work out what the passage is saying. We read words and phrases we don't understand. We encounter an unfamiliar context and culture. Maybe someone comes up with a dodgy explanation and we begin to wonder how much we can really be sure of. It is in moments like these that we could use a little bit of help, and fortunately there is a lot of really good help available. In fact, there are some incredibly good **free bible resources** for bible study*.

Online Sources:

www.biblegateway.com

Brilliant on **word searches** and comparing **different translations**. Excellent IVP New Testament **Commentary**

www.nextbible.org

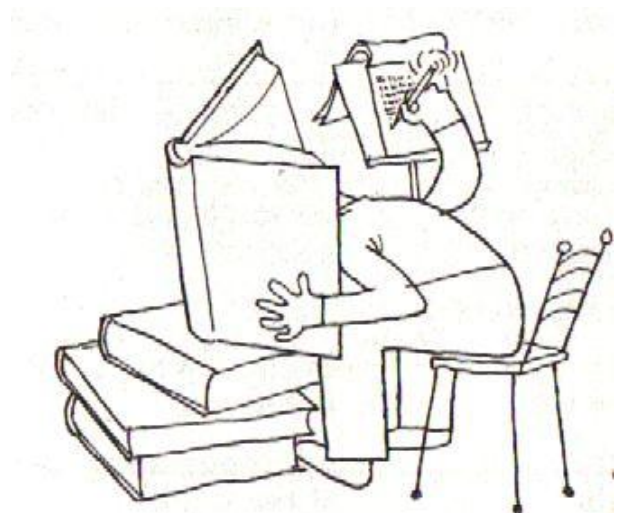
Excellent for **cross-references**, **word searches**, **word meanings**. Also a portal to a huge number of resources – translators notes, multiple translations, background info, articles, commentaries, maps (even google satellite!), You name it, it is there.

www.en.wikipedia.org for basic info and links

E-Sword

This has to be the friendliest, most well resourced free bible software program around.

This has all the basic essentials. Multiple translations, Dictionaries, Commentaries, Cross-references, search facilities. Well worth downloading from www.e-sword.com



Hard Copy

Bible Notes – intros, footnotes. (NIV study bible notes are excellent).

Cross-reference columns

Concordances at back of many bibles

* These are best to use to in conjunction with your own study and not instead of it.

We suggest you do most of your own work first, writing in the space around the passage on the left-hand page and then supplementing it with information and insights from the resources above.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

Why was this letter written?

The Philippian believers were some of Paul's most loyal supporters but they had lost track of his movements for several years. When they heard he was under arrest in a private house in Rome they decided to give him some money to help pay for the food and rent. One of their members, Epaphroditus, made the trip from what is now Greece to Rome, probably by sea. While in Rome, Epaphroditus became severely ill. As soon as he was well enough to travel, Paul encouraged him to return to Philippi to finish recovering. He carried with him this letter from Paul to the Philippians.

How it all started

It is really interesting to read how Paul and the Philippians met. (See Acts 16) Paul and his missionary team were busy in Galatia, Asia Minor (Turkey now) visiting the churches they had started there. Paul wanted to spend more time in Galatia, but the Holy Spirit seemed to be indicating their work there was finished. Then Paul had a vision of a man urging him to "come over to Macedonia and help us".

On the strength of this, the team set out for the province of



Macedonia, north of Greece. Philippi was the first city they visited. This represented the first major expansion of the gospel into Europe. Philippi was primarily a military outpost and contained so few Jews that there were not even the required 10 adult men to have a synagogue. So the church got started on a riverbank where a few Jewish women and "God-fearers" met for prayer. From its very low-key beginnings things quickly hotted up as people became believers and in particular as a demon-possessed slave girl was delivered. Accusations were flying and Paul and his team found themselves beaten up and thrown into prison. The drama intensified when a major earthquake hit the jail and freed all the prisoners.

The upshot of it all was that the jailor and his family were converted, Paul and his team were quickly escorted out of town (especially when the authorities learned he was a Roman citizen), and a fledgling church was born in a climate of discrimination and persecution.

Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

Underline words and phrases that express emotion and identify the emotions involved. What does this tell you about Paul and his relationship with the Philippians?

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

List several important facts about the Philippians believers from Acts 16:6-38. Check out www.en.wikipedia.org for additional background info about Philippi.

^{1:1} TNIV Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi,
together with the overseers and deacons:
² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ 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.
⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.
⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?
What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?
How could you respond?

Try This

Use Paul's prayer in 1:9-11 to pray for someone important to you.

Background

Read Acts 16:6-40 to find out how the Philippians church started.

Read Acts 28:17-31 to learn about Paul's circumstances when he wrote this letter.

"Saints" – literally "holy ones" or "set apart ones"

"Overseers". In the second century AD this came to mean the chief elder or pastor in a city, but in Paul's time there were several overseers in the Philippian church

"Deacons" Literally, "servants" a more general term than bond slaves. Acts 6:1-7 tells of the origin of this office among Christians. Deacons were helpers of the sick, poor, hungry and those with spiritual wounds.

IVP Background Commentary.

1:1. The title "servants" (bond slave) is not demeaning in either a Jewish (the prophets had been called "servants of God") or Greco-Roman (slaves of the emperor and other high officials wielded far more power than independent free persons) setting.

1:3-4. Jewish language sometimes connects prayers with "memorials" or "rememberings" before God (as in Ro 1:9); here Paul probably means he thanks God during his regular prayers for the Philippians (cf. Phl 4:6).

1:5. The term translated "partnership" (koinōnia) was often used in an economic sense for those who "share" monetarily. Here it includes the financial help the Philippians have given (4:10-20).

1:6. "Day of Christ Jesus" adapts *Old Testament language for the "day of the Lord," and so assumes that Christ is divine.

1:7. Letters of friendship often mentioned the writer's longing for his friends. Given his imprisonment and legal situation, Paul also naturally uses language common in legal proceedings: the "defence" and "confirmation," or vindication, acquittal.

Questions

Note down everything you notice about Paul's relationship with the Philippians? Overall how would you describe this relationship?

Paul had a real sense of partnership with the Philippians(verse 4).

1. In what ways did Paul show his partnership with Philippians (1:3-4, 7-11, 23-26)?
2. In what ways did the Philippians show their partnership with Paul (1:19, 2:25, 4:14-18)?

Paul was very confident about the Philippians future (verse 6). What was he confident about and why?

What do you learn about encouraging people from Paul?

What do you learn about praying for people from Paul?

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26

The happy prisoner.

The Philippians probably sent Epaphroditus to Rome to cheer Paul up. After all, the great man was bound to be depressed, chained all day to a Roman guard under threat of death, confined with no opportunity to travel around sharing the Goodnews, something he was born to do. But what did Epaphroditus find? A happy prisoner! Is this a case of, "Always look on the bright side of life", or is there something deeper going on here?

What was Paul's secret? What did he see in his present circumstances that others would easily miss? What was he thinking? What was he hoping for?

In this section we get insights into how he thought about his imprisonment, his rivals, his immediate future, and his destiny.

In particular notice his focus on Christ, the gospel and the people in his life. What attitudes do you see? What does he believe God is up to behind the scenes? To paraphrase Brutus, "Yon Paul has that lean and hungry look; he talks too much. Such men are dangerous." Here is a person not just making the best of his circumstances but actually turning them around for the glory of God. No wonder the joy is flowing!



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

Note everything you can about Paul's **attitude** to his life and his circumstances

1:12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Come up with two **questions** people might have arising out of this section. Suggest possible answers. Compare your answers with

www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

How does this passage speak to my **inner life** – my character, heart, behaviour, attitudes, my identity, my priorities and purpose?

Background

The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus (2:25) to Paul because they had heard that Paul was in prison. Since Epaphroditus' departure they had probably heard nothing of Paul. They may have thought he was discouraged and depressed.

"Chains" (1:13). A short length of chain binding the wrist of a prisoner to the wrist of a guard. Paul was allowed to rent private rooms, but he was chained 24/7 to a soldier. As each soldier took his turn, he was a captive audience hearing Paul pray, read Scripture, dictate letters and receive visitors. A prisoner who cared about his guards and who had such strange beliefs would have aroused great interest among the soldiers.

IVP Background Commentary

1:12 Greek philosophers typically declared that neither imprisonment nor death mattered; only one's attitude did. Paul partly agrees with this view but for very different reasons: God's sovereign use of hardship for his glory (1:12-14, a Jewish and *Old Testament belief), and the superiority of undistracted devotion to Jesus (1:21,23).

1:13. The Palace guard numbered about 3,000! They were the emperor's elite bodyguard. They were viewed as clients of the emperor (thus part of his household), they were kept loyal with the highest pay in the Roman military. Many of these guards would have been individually assigned to Paul during his imprisonment.

1:14-18. Jewish teachers allowed that serving God from impure motives was better than not serving him at all. They also unequivocally insisted, however, that those who used the *law only for their own gain would not share in the world to come.

1:20-23. Philosophers often argued that death was neutral, not evil; it was either annihilation or the migration of the soul from one place to another. Paul sees it as an evil (1Co 15:26) but also as a way to pursue Christ undistracted. Most Palestinian Jews emphasized the future resurrection of the bodies of the righteous but believed that the souls of the righteous dead were meanwhile in heaven with God; Paul agrees with them.

Questions

How does Paul feel about his circumstances and why?

Why is Paul unconcerned about the selfishness of those who preach Christ in order to make trouble for Paul? (Compare Philippians 1:15-18 with Galatians 1:6-9. When is Paul angry about people who preach from selfish motives? When is he not angry?)

What do you learn about Paul's attitude to life and death?

What do you learn about what happens when we die?

Why do you think Paul was confident he would not die in the immediate future?

How does Paul's example challenge you?

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:4

Real buddies

In the previous study we learned a lot about Paul's attitudes toward his *own* circumstances. Now the focus is on the Philippians and *their circumstances*. He has just mentioned how much he appreciated his own partnership with the Philippians, now he speaks of *their partnership* with one another.

So how would this partnership show up in the midst of the circumstances at Philippi? It is clear that while following Jesus wouldn't necessarily result in imprisonment for the Philippians, as it had for Paul, it would result in suffering and challenge in one form or another^{1,29}. So what does true partnership look like in the face of opposition. And how is this partnership expressed in everyday relationships within the church community? What qualities should characterise the Philippians' relationships with one another?

This section develops the powerful themes of unity, humility and servant hood that permeate the letter.



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

Note all **repeated** words, phrases or ideas. List the **themes** of the passage

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Summarize the main thrust of the passage in one short paragraph.

^{1:27} Whatever happens, as citizens of heaven live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together with one accord for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

^{2:1} Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Pray your way through the passage. Read a sentence or two then stop and pray about whatever comes to mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to direct your heart and mind as you pray.

Background

Civic Pride in Philippi

The Romans were in the habit of settling retired army veterans in strategic parts of their Empire. The veterans were honoured with the rights of Roman citizenship as well as with land to use and bequeath to heirs. The citizens of these colonies were always enormously proud of their identities as Romans, fully understood the value of their status, and so were utterly loyal. They modelled their city government after Rome's, including official titles (Acts 16:20). The colony of Philippi possessed fertile soil, gold and silver mines, and a toll gate on the trade route between Asia and Europe. The Philippians could not have asked for a better situation, and they owed it to Rome.⁴

This background helps to explain Paul's instruction to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy ..." in 1:27 and his reference to "citizenship" in 3:20 (see pages 43-44 and 87). The Philippian Christians had been brought up to find their identity and pride in Roman citizenship, to make Rome and Philippi their first loyalty. Paul wanted them to identify first of all with a different city and kingdom.

IVP Background Commentary

1:27. "Conduct yourselves" uses the Greek language of a citizen in a free state (cf. 3:20), language that Jewish writers used to describe their people obeying God's law (as in Ac 23:1).

1:28. The confidence that Paul suggests here alludes to the Old Testament and Jewish hope that God would destroy his people's enemies in the end time but vindicate and save his people.

1:29. Although Jewish people sought to avoid persecution when possible, they extolled the martyrs who preferred death to disobeying God.

1:30. Like many Greek moralists, Paul applies the language of ancient athletic competitions ("contest" or "conflict" - KJV, NASB) to the life of the moral person. Here the issue is persecution.

2:1-4. Paul borrows language commonly used in Greek homonoia speeches, which advocated harmony and unity among the hearers.

2:1 "Fellowship with the Spirit". Koinōnia, the same word as "partnership" in 1:5. Paul could mean the communion between us and the Spirit, or the communion we have with each other because we each share in God's Spirit.

Questions

What reasons does Paul give for living out the gospel fearlessly?

What will need to be true of us if we are to continue to live this way?

What are some of the good things we will experience if God is fully present in our relationships with one another?

What attitudes will be present?

What is the difference between unity and uniformity?

What does it mean to count others as better than ourselves? Is this false humility?

In your own words, describe one of the desirable attitudes in 2:2-4 that does not come naturally to you.

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-18

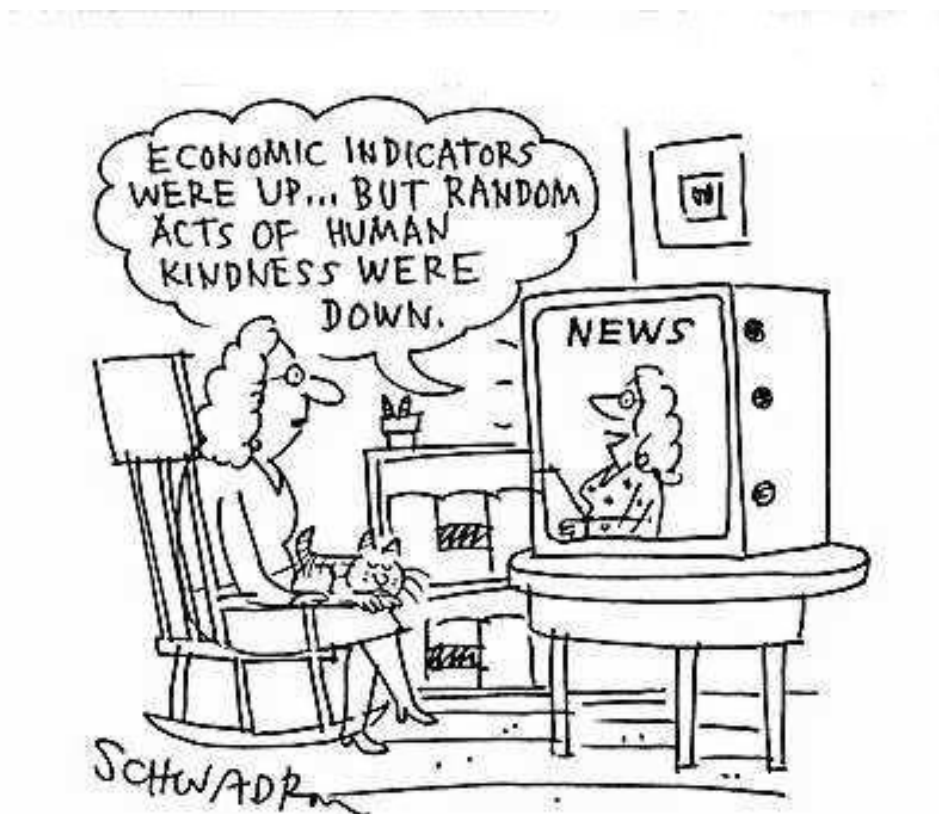
Sacrificial love

This section (and the whole of Chapter two) demonstrates powerfully what genuine humility makes possible – amazing “random acts of human kindness”. Sacrificial service. The truly humble person is free to give himself/herself in amazing ways.

Can you believe that God would take such an upside-down, back-to-front way to love us back to himself? ^{Isaiah 55:8,9} It is wonderful to discover that at the core of our eternal God's heart is humble, sacrificial love.

You will also discover that we not only have the example of Jesus to inspire us, we have his presence and power to enable us.

As an aside this passage contains important clues about the identity of Jesus and insights into his relationship with the Father.



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

List, underline or highlight all the instructions given (note the verbs). What do

^{2:5} In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act to fulfil his good purpose.

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Draw as many conclusions you can about Jesus identity and nature? Find at least two supporting cross-references (Try using www.nextbible.org Xref Tab)

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Take some time to thank and praise Jesus using verses 5-11

Background

2:6-7 "Nature". Greek *morphe*. Inward character of a thing as well as the outward expression of that character. It has nothing to do with shape. Light expresses the "form" of fire, and a good deed expresses the "form" of goodness. So, Paul may be saying that Christ both possessed and expressed the essence of Deity before his incarnation. In Jewish literature popular in Paul's day, *morphe* meant "condition, status". In this sense, Christ possessed the status and privileges of Deity (worthiness of highest honour, lordship) before his incarnation.

2:9 "Name". For Jews, the name above every name was the name of God – YHWH (Yahweh, Jehovah). God's name was so holy that it was considered unpronounceable: when reading Scripture, Jews substituted the word Lord for the name of God.

2:17 "Poured out like a drink offering". In both Roman and Jewish sacrifices, the main offering was an animal killed, and a cup of wine was poured over it as a secondary offering (Exodus 29:38-41)

IVP Background Commentary

2:5-6. Some scholars suggest that Christ's being in the "form of God" alludes to Adam being formed in God's image (Ge 1:26). Unlike Adam, who being human sought divinity (Gen 3:5), Jesus, being deity, relinquished his rightful position of honour.

2:7. The "servant" of Isa 53 also was "poured out" or "emptied himself," though not in incarnation but in death (Isa 53:12; cf. Phil 2:8).

2:8. Judaism prized obedience to the point of death in stories about its martyrs. Crucifixion was the most degrading form of execution, reserved for non-Roman criminals who were slaves or free persons of the lowest status.

2:10-11. Isa 45:23 ("every knee will bow . . . every tongue will declare") refers to the final submission of all nations to God; that Paul applies the text to Jesus (especially with an Old Testament divine title, "Lord," in v. 11) is telling. Those "in heaven" would include the angels, probably the rebellious angels who rule the pagan nations (see comment on Ep 1:19-23). Greeks worshiped gods in the heavens, earth, sea and underworld; traditional Greek mythology also placed the shadowy existence of departed souls in the underworld. Paul announces that whatever categories of beings there are, they must acknowledge Christ's rule, because he is exalted above them..

2:12-13. The teaching that they are enabled to obey by God's power is virtually unparalleled in pre-Christian literature.

2:14. "Grumbling" and "disputing" (NASB) had characterized Israel in the wilderness and were condemned in the Old Testament. Jewish tradition often compared the righteous with "lights" in a dark world; cf. especially Da 12:3 (the term Paul uses here was especially applied to heavenly bodies, reflecting an image like the one Daniel uses).

2:16. The "day of Christ" is modelled after the Old Testament "day of the Lord" (see comment on 1:6).

Questions

What do you learn about humility from Jesus?

How is Jesus' humility different from underrating oneself or feeling worthless?

What do you learn about Jesus and God the Father and their relationship from 2:6-11? Can you build a case for Jesus being God using this passage?

How is working out our own salvation different from working for it?

What does it look like when someone is working out their own salvation? (can you answer from what you have studied of Philipians so far)

What difference should it make to know that God is at work in us?

Can you identify some ways "God has worked in you to act according to his good purpose", recently? (Phil 2:13). Share these with one another?

Creative stuff

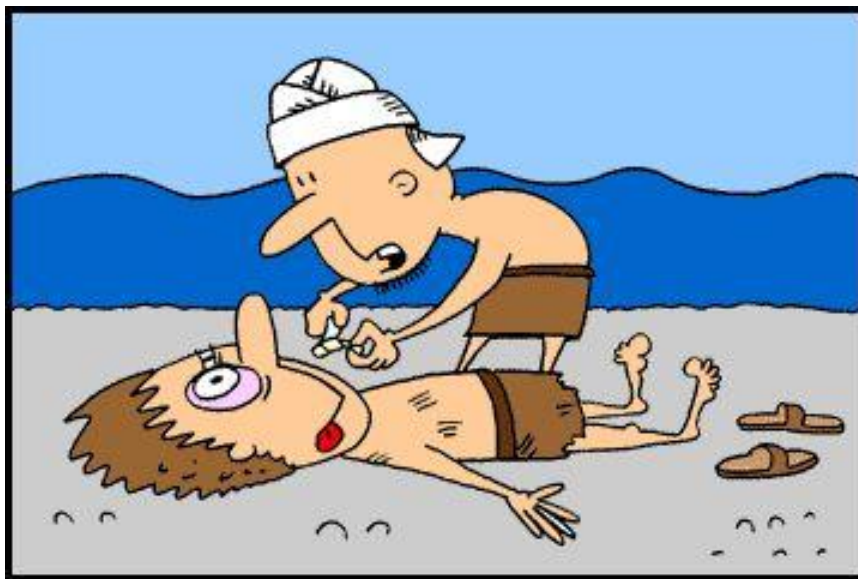
Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

Going the extra mile

In the second half of chapter 2 we meet **Timothy**. You will notice Paul plans to **send** Timothy from Rome to the Philippians (verse 19). This gives us one small clue about how the Church functioned in the first century. There was quite a bit of travelling to and fro. There's a good deal of evidence that early Christian communities were largely based on small groups. These small groups were invariably based on households (see Romans 16:5,10,11). These "households" were a bit bigger than the 'nuclear' families of today – up to 20-30 people, including servants. In Philippi there would have been a network of these house-based groups served by local leaders (see Phil 1:1). Crucial to the ongoing health and vitality of these household churches were the visits of itinerant specialists, like Timothy. Timothy was part of Paul's missionary team of teachers, prophets and evangelists. Several had accompanied Paul to Rome and were there with him while he was under house arrest.

These mobile teams had a vital role in ensuring both the *purity of the gospel*, through their visits and their letters; and the also the *mobility of the gospel* as they reached out to ever more distant places. People who functioned like this had to be available. They also had to have servant-hearts. This sacrificial, servant attitude is a strong theme in this chapter.



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

Make a list the character qualities displayed by Timothy and Epaphroditus

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Come up with several cross-references mentioning Timothy and Epaphroditus. Try using www.biblegateway.com

2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. ²⁵ But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. ²⁶ For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹ Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him, ³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Pray some of the qualities you see in Timothy and Epaphroditus into your own life.

Background

Timothy had joined Paul's mission team shortly before it first visited Philippi (Acts 16:1-12). The colony had given Timothy his first chance to make new disciples, since the team had previously been visiting churches Paul had already founded.

23-24 Paul wanted news from Philippi through Timothy. Timothy was also to take news of Paul to Philippi, and so it was necessary for him to wait until the outcome of Paul's trial was known, whether it was to be release or death (cf. 1:23-24). Paul appears to have had an increasing hope that it would be release, and so he would be able to *come soon* to Philippi.

26-28 Something had happened that made it wise for Paul to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi rather than keep him at his side. He had been critically ill, but by the mercy of God (mercy to Paul too as he saw it) he had recovered.

IVP Background Commentary

2:22. Messengers were often sent as personal representatives, to be received with the same honour accorded the sender (e.g., 2Sa 19:37-38). Teachers and *disciples often developed an intimate relationship described in terms of "father" and "son."

2:23. News was difficult to send, because it had to be carried by messenger — a sometimes dangerous undertaking given travel conditions at various times of the year (cf. 2:30). Paul therefore wants to wait until he can give a full report of the outcome of his trial.

2:24. Letters were used as surrogates for one's presence but also often announced one's coming.

2:25-30

Epaphroditus had been the Philippians' messenger, bringing their gift to Paul in prison (4:18); he no doubt carried Paul's letter back to them. Travel conditions were dangerous and harsh, especially at sea in late fall and early spring, and these conditions decreased one's resistance to antiquity's many diseases (vv. 26-27). Because "Epaphroditus" is a common name, no conclusions about his origin may be drawn from it, but the context suggests that he was from Philippi.

Questions

Compare 2:20-22 to 2:2-4. How does Timothy show the behaviour Paul wants the Philippians to have?

What do the terms "fellow worker" and "fellow soldier" suggest to you?

In what specific ways had Epaphroditus demonstrated he was a fellow soldier and fellow worker to Paul?

What stands out to you about how Paul speaks about these two men?

How could we become fellow soldiers and fellow workers to one another?

To whom could you be a "fellow soldier" or a "fellow worker"?

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

A mind made up

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a real window into his heart. In chapters one and three in particular we learn a lot about his motivations, convictions and ambitions. He was radically changed by his encounter with Jesus Christ.

Before his conversion Paul (Saul as he was then) was a Pharisee, and a very zealous one. What was unusual about Paul was that he was born, not in Israel, but in Tarsus, a city in Asian Minor (Turkey today), as a Greek-speaking Roman citizen! Tarsus was known for its schools of philosophy and liberal arts. To be a Roman citizen his parents must have been very wealthy. They were also very strict Jews. Saul was sent to Jerusalem to study Jewish law under the foremost rabbi of his day, the Pharisee Gamaliel (Acts 22:3, Galatians 1:14). Here he became a member of the strictest party of the Pharisees who vehemently opposed the followers of Jesus. When the followers of Jesus were driven out of Jerusalem Saul was given authority to pursue them to Damascus and arrest them. It was on route to Damascus that he had his life-changing encounter with Jesus.

What all this meant was that Paul was ideally equipped to carry the gospel beyond the cultural and religious world of the Jews and into the Roman and Greek speaking world of the Gentiles. From the Syrian city of Antioch he was sent out on various mission trips into the Roman Empire. It was on one of these trips that he planted the church at Philippi.

What we see in this section is Paul's **radical commitment** to Jesus. He had well and truly made up his mind that there was nothing better in life than following Jesus. His experience of Christ and his hunger to know Christ was the reason he had such a huge impact on the world of his day, and through his writing on our world.



Recent studies show that a man's fear of commitment extends to the television, where he suffers an unrelenting paranoia that something better is on another channel.

Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

List all the points of contrast between Paul's life before and after meeting Christ.

^{3,1} Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. ² Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If others think they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Note down a couple of things you find difficult to understand (or think could be difficult for someone else). Come up with a couple of Cross-references. And consult a commentary www.biblegateway.com (or E-Sword or cross-reference column)

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Choose a passage (verse or two) to memorise from what you studied of Philippians so far. Write it out on card and place it somewhere obvious.

Background

“Righteousness”

The Old Testament called a person righteous if they were living according to the standards of the covenant relationship. This included obedience to God's commands, as well as living “without pride of heart, depending on the Lord for protection and vindication”. However, rabbinic Judaism dropped the part about humble trust in God, and said that righteousness was simply obeying God's commands and doing works of charity and mercy. Jesus (Matthew 5:20) and Paul (Philippians 3:9) restore the idea that the purely human righteousness of conformity to the Law would never meet the standards of the covenant relationship. A person must humbly accept God's gift of righteousness

IVP Background Commentary

3:2. The opponents here are like the travelling Jewish Christian teachers Paul had encountered in Galatia who want to circumcise *Gentiles. It is not clear whether they have already come to Philippi or are simply travelling about, and Paul is warning that they may come there.

*Cynic philosophers were regularly called “dogs”. Jewish teaching considered dogs unclean and sometimes sexually immoral; the *Old Testament applies the title to male cult prostitutes (Dt 23:17). Such a title would certainly make the pietists who were demanding circumcision recoil. There were “beware of dog” signs even in ancient Rome, where they were pets and watchdogs no doubt reinforcing the biting sarcasm of Paul's phrase. Here Paul uses another word for “circumcision” (NASB), which means “mutilation”

3:5. Those born Jewish males were circumcised on the eighth day; by this virtue Paul eliminates any competition from proselytes converted by his opponents later in life — proselytes had lower social status in Judaism than those born Jewish. Pharisees were noted for being the most meticulous observers of the law — something his opponents now claimed to be.

3:6. “Zeal” for the law did not always include violence, but the chief models for such zeal included Phinehas (Nu 25:7-13) and especially the Maccabees, and Jewish patriots called themselves “*Zealots” in the war against Rome not long after Paul wrote these words. By defining his legalistic righteousness in terms of his persecution of Christians, Paul associates his opponents' position of “zeal” for the law with opposition to the Philippian Christians' faith.

3:8. “Dung” (KJV) or “rubbish” (NIV, NASB, NRSV) usually meant either excrement or food to be thrown away, which dogs might enjoy (3:2). (Ancient speakers valued skill in producing insolent insults.)

3:9. As in 3:6, the problem is not the law but that the righteousness is Paul's own, hence inadequate. Both biblical psalmists and later Jewish ones whose hymns appear in the Dead Sea Scrolls waited on God for their vindication or acquittal, and Paul likewise had to receive his justification, or righteousness, from God alone.

Questions

What do learn about the inner mind and heart of a true believer from this passage?

How does this compare with the heart and mind of a merely religious person?

Does Paul mean that a believer must literally give up everything for Christ? Why or why not?

What do we learn about the place and nature of ambition in the life of a believer?

What are some things you need to “consider rubbish” as you seek to know and experience Christ more deeply?

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1

holy ambition and good role models

This letter talks a lot about the people we allow to influence us. Our role models. We are encouraged to have the same attitude as *Jesus*, to follow *Paul's* example, to take note of people like *Timothy* and *Epaphroditus*, and we are warned about people who are on the wrong track, some dangerously so.

In this passage two dangerous mindsets are addressed: the feeling we have arrived, and the idea that we can have it all here.

It seems that there were some in Philippi who thought that they had reached the goal of Christian perfection, that they had 'arrived', and it also appears that there were others for whom the measure of their Christianity was how much earthly material blessing they could have here and now. Paul is warning that these people are not good role models. He is urging the Philippians to rise above all this. To have a holy ambition. To model themselves on those who aimed to become as Christ-like as they possibly could during their short stay on earth.



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

List all you can about the believers approach to life.

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

What can you conclude about the after-life from this passage? Find several good cross-references.

3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Philippians ⁴

^{4:1} Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Select a sentence that seems to be speaking to you.

Read it slowly several times, each time **emphasizing a different word**. Note down your thoughts.

Background

IVP Background Commentary

3:12-13. In the language of athletic competition — often used metaphorically by ancient moralists — Paul describes his striving for the future hope of 3:11. Greco-Roman sages sometimes admitted that they were not yet “perfect” but spoke of themselves as the “mature,” the wise, as opposed to those who were still novices. “What is behind” (NIV) belongs to Paul’s image of the race; to win, one must keep one’s eyes on the finish line; Greek runners normally ran in a straight line and back.

3:14. At the end of each race, officials had their heralds proclaim the winner and call him up to receive his prize (in the Olympic games, a palm branch). In Paul’s metaphor, the prize is the full revelation of Christ at the *resurrection (3:10-11).

3:17-4:1

3:17. Ancient teachers often used themselves as examples. (Paul had given four examples, using himself for one, in chapter 2, and again used himself in 3:4-14.)

3:18. Displays of emotion were considered appropriate in public speaking, but Paul’s earlier expressions of outrage (3:2) fit the ancient norm better than “weeping.” “With tears” (NIV, NRSV, TEV) or “weeping” (KJV, NASB) indicates his love for his opponents.

3:19. Gluttony especially became part of Roman culture, and its practice by the aristocracy was a frequent butt of satirists’ humour. But being ruled by one’s “belly” meant more than gluttony; it was used to mean any fleshly indulgence (cf. “bodily desires” - TEV). This would be a serious insult to those who thought they were zealous for the *law; but Paul had already “shamed” their “glory” by his own example in 3:4-8.

3:20. Citizens of Philippi, a Roman *colony, were automatically citizens of Rome, sharing all the rights and privileges of Roman citizens even though most of them had never been there. The Philippians therefore understand quite well what it means to be citizens of the supreme city while not yet living there.

3:21. Paul’s view of the resurrection is that it involves the body, but one distinct in nature from the current body (Greek culture considered the idea of a bodily resurrection vulgar superstition; see comment on 1Co 15). As in Judaism, the resurrection occurs at the time of the ultimate battle, when God subordinates all his enemies (cf. also 1Co 15:25-28).

4:1. That the Philippians are Paul’s “crown” indicates that they are in some sense his prize (cf. 3:14; 1Th 2:19 and comment on 1Co 9:24-25). They must stand firm against Paul’s opponents and persevere if Paul is to receive the reward he seeks for his labour for them — their salvation. There were different sorts of crowns. Heroes could be rewarded with public crowns, but the term applied especially to athletes’ wreaths; Judaism also used the image for rewards at the end time.

Questions

Paul says he has not already obtained “all this” (3:12). What has Paul not obtained? What is the goal? What is the prize?

Paul says he forgets what is behind (3:13). What past things might he be forgetting? Why does he need to forget these things?

As we follow Christ who should we be wary of? What characterises them? (see also 3:2-3)

What characterises people we should follow?

What is the believers ultimate destiny?

Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-23

The laid-back life

Wow! What a contrast to the striving and driving ambition Paul was encouraging us all to have in Chapter 3. Here we are presented with a man at rest, contented, happy with his lot and encouraging others to be the same. What is going on here? Is he contradicting himself? No. It is really just a case of “don’t sweat the small stuff”

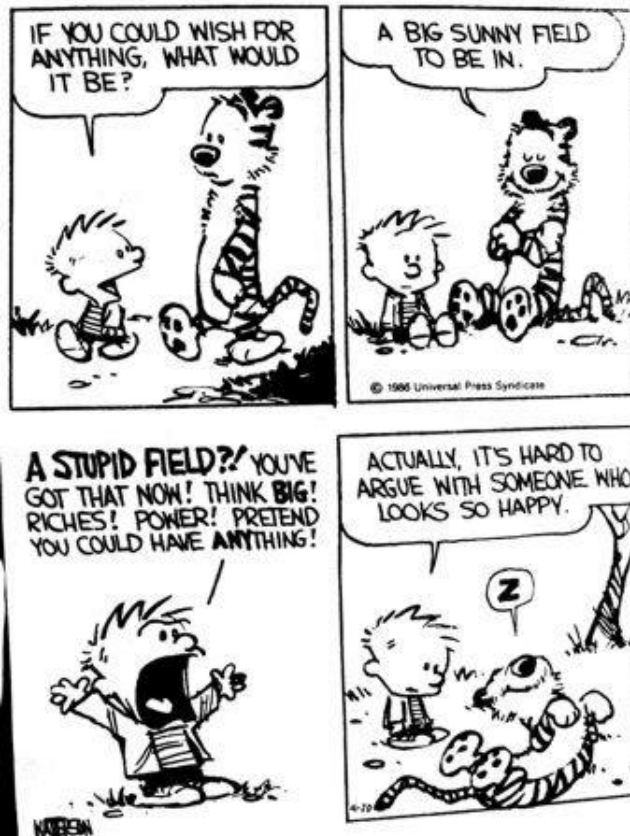
Echoes of Jesus here.

So then, don't worry saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Mat 6:31-33

What is fascinating in this section is learning what is important to Paul when it comes to receiving support and having enough bread on the table. See if you can figure out why he is so excited.

Calvin and Hobbes



Observation

Note key ideas, words, arguments, instructions, illustrations, emotions, attitudes, actions. Gather info about people, relationships, events.

Try This:

List as many marks as you can of a healthy Christian community.

Interpretation

Note words to define, ideas to clarify, questions to answer. Gather relevant info from passage itself, cross-references and background sources. Suggest answers and conclusions

Try this:

Write an outline for this passage with headings and sub points for each section

^{4,2} I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-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 every situation, 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 and sisters, 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.

¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²² All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Response

What does this passage stir in you – ideas, longings and desires?

What situations, people, experiences, issues, come to mind?

How could you respond?

Try This

Review what you have written in all your response sections for Philippians. What has been most helpful? What do you need to continue to work on?

Background

IVP Background Commentary

4:2. "Euodia" and "Syntyche". Their prominence as Paul's co-workers may have been more acceptable at Philippi than it would have been in some other parts of the Empire; inscriptions indicate heavy involvement of women in the religious activities of this city.

4:3. The "book of life" is an Old Testament image further developed in ancient Judaism (e.g., Ex 32:32-33; Da 12:1; Mal 3:16; the Essene Damascus Document 20:19; *Jubilees 36:10).

4:4-5. "The Lord is near" could refer to the Second Coming (3:20-21) but more likely means that the Lord is close to his people and hears their cries (Dt 4:7; Ps 145:18).

4:6-7. "Peace" (v. 7) could indicate tranquillity, although in the context of unity it may have its usual meaning of peace with one another (as in Greco-Roman homonoia speeches).

4:8. Like many writers, Paul resorts to a full list of virtues, including arete, "excellence," which was central to the Greek concept of virtue. Throughout this list he borrows the language of Greek ethics, although nothing he says would have been objectionable to Jewish or Christian readers. Greek and Roman philosophers repeatedly emphasized thinking such virtuous thoughts, and Jewish writers repeatedly borrowed their language the same way Paul does to communicate to Greek-speaking Jewish readers.

4:11-13. Greek moralists, influenced by Stoic thought, praised those who could be content with little as well as with much. (Cynics went so far as to prove their contentment in little by making certain that was all they ever had.) It was said that the wise man needed no one but himself and was completely independent. Unlike such philosophers, who depended only on themselves, however, Paul is "self-sufficient" only by virtue of Christ, who works in him. Paul's "abundance" (NASB) would have been meagre and simple by modern standards; artisans were better off than the poor, but far below the standard of living enjoyed by the modern Western middle class or by the well-to-do of antiquity.

4:14-16. The language of "sharing" (partnership - 4:14-15) is the language of ancient business documents; it may even suggest a special account from which the Philippians sent Paul help when he was in need. "For my needs" (NASB, NRSV) also occurs in business documents specifying the purposes of a disbursement.

4:22-23. The "household of Caesar" could refer to anyone in the Roman civil service directly dependent on Caesar, including all his slaves and freedmen; it always indicated great prestige. It most likely refers here to the Praetorian Guard. If Paul was in Rome at this point, anyone who guarded him (Ac 28:16,30) would naturally be exposed to his teaching. Even Caesar's slaves wielded more power and prestige than most well-off free persons; the Praetorian Guard itself held the prestige of the Roman military's elite, often rewarded by Caesar himself. Paul's greeting would impress his readers: his imprisonment has indeed advanced the gospel (1:12-13).

Questions

Does agreeing "in the Lord" (4:2) mean that we must come to the same opinions? If not, what does it mean?

Why does a believer not have to be anxious about his needs (4:6-7, 11-13, 19)?

Why is thanksgiving important as we ask God for things (4:6-7)?

What can we learn about giving and receiving money from Paul and the Philippians?

Paul says he is really pleased that the Philippians are giving to him but not primarily because it meets his needs. What really makes him happy?

How does God respond when we give? (4:18-19)

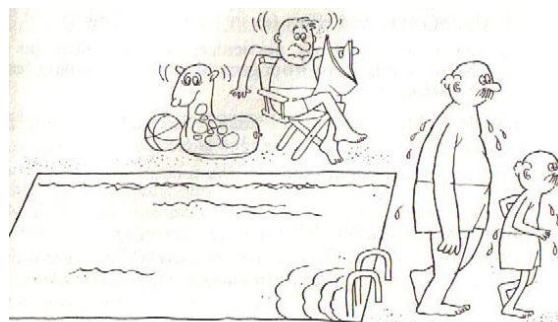
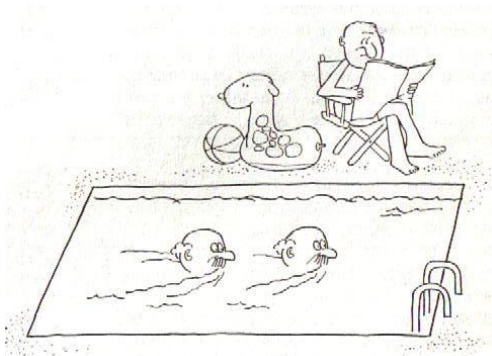
Creative stuff

Use your imagination and this space (reverse side for more space) to respond creatively to the passage picture, cartoon, illustration, poem, diagram, analogy, tale, joke, rave, whatever! Just let your creativity flow.

Study Method Ideas

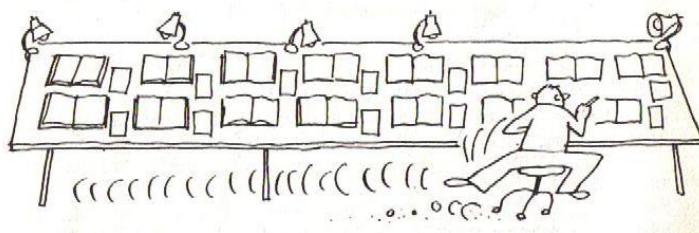
Observations

- Ask the “**Detective**” **Questions** - Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
- Take note of the **emotional tone** of the chapter. What do you think Paul was feeling as he wrote these words? Underline words and phrases that seem to express strong emotion and identify the emotions involved.
- Read the passage from **different perspectives**. Read it from Paul’s perspective. Read it from the Philippian’s perspective. You could even read it as a complete stranger who found the letter on the street. What do you notice?
- Note **comparisons** and **contrasts**
- Gather all the info you can about **people** and **places** mentioned
- Note all **repeated** words, phrases or ideas. List the **themes** of the passage
- Underline all the **nouns** in the passage. What **topics** are developed.
- List/underline all the **instructions** given.
- Underline all the **verbs** in the passage. Note the **action** in the passage.
- **Draw lines** between related parts of the passage. You could circle or colour code them
- List any **examples**, **illustrations** or **analogies**
- Note any linking words that reveal the logic/structure of the chapter – if, but, because, therefore, then, so, also, etc.



Interpretation

- **Define** important words. Use a dictionary, bible dictionary or concordance to come up with a definition.
- Come up with **questions**. For each question find at least one **cross-reference**. Find cross-references by recalling similar passages you have read before. Check your Bible’s cross-reference column and footnotes. Look up key words in the concordance at the back of your Bible or at www.Biblegateway.com, or www.nextbible.org
- or use a bible software program like E-Sword. You may also find some good cross-references by skim reading the rest of the book.
- Find key passages that give important **background** information. It might be good to compare this book of the bible with other passages or books that address similar themes. What differences do you notice? How might the circumstances have been different?
- Find **background information** to culture and times from the bible itself or external sources. Use www.Biblegateway.com, or www.nextbible.org, E-Sword or IVP Background Commentary
- Draw a **diagram**, **picture** or **illustration** that conveys the meaning of the passage
- **Summarize** the main thrust of the passage in one short paragraph. It may help to first write a single sentence capturing the content of each paragraph in the chapter
- Develop an **Outline** for the passage. Break it into sections with a title for each section. Write sub points under each section title. Give the chapter an overall title. Try to keep the titles and sub points as succinct as possible. Outlining helps you identify the main ideas and see how they are connected.



Your Response

- **Write out phrases**, sentences or verses that seem particularly meaningful. Write down any feelings, memories, relationships, issues or situations that come to mind.
- Ask these **questions**: Is there a command to obey? A promise to claim? An error to avoid? An example to follow? A principle to apply?
- Select a sentence that seems to be speaking to you. Read it slowly several times, each time **emphasizing a different word**. Note down your thoughts.
- **Memorise** a verse that particularly speaks to you.
- Select a sentence that brings to mind a person or a situation. Use the sentence to **pray for that person** or situation.
- **Pray** your way through the passage. Read a sentence or two then stop and pray about whatever comes to mind. Invite the Holy Spirit to direct your heart and mind as you pray
- What does this passage say about **God's** character, purposes and relationship with people?
- What does this passage say about my **relationship with God**?
- What does this passage say about my **inner life** – my character, heart, behaviour, attitudes, my identity, my priorities and purpose?
- What does this say about my **relationships with other people**, my friends, faith community, family, 'neighbours'?
- What does this say about my **outer world** – my work, my studies, health, money, possessions? What does it say about the world I live in – the govt, environment, justice, arts...?

