

THE WHOLE BIBLE

PHILIPPIANS

This Bible study, one of 66 studies covering the entire Bible, is made up of one-page lessons covering short sections of the book. The electronic format (student's and leader's guides) allows adaptation to individual needs.

Benefits of one-page lessons:

- Hand out only what you need, relative to the length of the class session and how much content you wish to cover. Taken at a steady pace, a page can be covered in about 20 minutes.
- See at a glance all the material that pertains to the section being covered. Use the discussion questions as your basic outline and draw in material from the "Look" and "Apply" sections as you wish.

Suggestions for using these lessons:

- Teach an entire book, or teach just part of a book.
- Use a single lesson sheet for a "19 Minute" style Bible study.
- Use a single lesson sheet as a meeting opener, either as a devotion or a short Bible study.
- Build your own Bible studies. The possibilities are endless. For example:
 - Assemble all the lessons on the penitential psalms, psalms of praise, or David's early years.
 - Assemble sections that deal with predestination, and teach the pertinent passages in their context.
 - Study all references to mountains, cities, nations, etc., pointing out their importance in the lives of God's people.

Note: The appropriate pages in The People's Bible commentary volumes are referenced. However, the authors were given the freedom to develop their own studies, so these lessons are not, in a strict sense, study guides to those volumes.

We pray these lessons will help God's people grow in faith and in service to his kingdom.

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Philippians 1:1-11

The joyful servant, Paul, gives encouragement

(*The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 14-22*)

Look

- Verse 1 *"To all the saints in Christ Jesus"*—Saints are holy ones through faith in Jesus' work of redemption.
- Verse 1 *"Philippi"*—Paul had started the church in Philippi on his second missionary journey. See Acts 16:12 and the following verses for the account of Paul's initial work in that city.
- Verse 2 *"Grace and peace to you."* Grace (God's undeserved love in Christ for sinners) is the cause of salvation, and peace is its result.

Discuss

1. Whom did Paul thank for the faith of the Philippians? for their continued growth in faith?
2. What was Paul's personal situation when he penned this letter?
3. In a few short verses, Paul tells us what being a Christian means. Complete the sentences.

When knowledge and depth of insight grow,_____.

When our love grows in knowledge and depth of insight,_____.

When this happens,_____.

Being pure and blameless means being_____.

When this happens,_____.

Apply

4. In these verses, Paul expressed his warm feelings for the Philippians. Why did Paul have such fond feelings for them? What model does this provide for us?
5. Sometimes we separate the heart and the mind. We view the mind as "knowing" things and the heart as "feeling" things. How did Paul show that knowledge and feelings, specifically love, are joined together?

Paul greeted the Philippian Christians. He expressed his love for them and prayed for their growth.

Philippians 1:12-19

Paul's imprisonment has served the gospel's cause

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 23-28)

Look

- Verse 12 *"What has happened to me"*—Paul was imprisoned in Rome at this time, accused of being a troublemaker, desecrating the temple, and forsaking the laws of Moses. (Acts 24:5,6)
- Verse 15 *"Some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry."* This is perhaps a reference to preachers who had arrived in Rome before Paul, who were now jealous of the attention Paul was receiving. Others, in the process of tearing Paul down, spoke about Paul's message, while proclaiming Christ.

Discuss

1. What blessings did Paul's imprisonment bring
 - for the gospel?
 - for the Christians in Rome?
2. Paul's imprisonment had caused people to take sides and speak about him. What were the two positions people took in regard to Paul? Why was Paul glad about the preaching, even the preaching of those who preached from false motives?
3. Up to now, Paul had reflected on the past. Now, however, he looked to the future. What was his attitude as he looked into the future? What two resources could he count on?
4. Paul was confident that through the prayers of the saints and the work of God's Spirit, he would be delivered. A better translation might be, "I will be victorious." What victory would be his if he lived? if he died?

Apply

5. What blessings does God give his sons and daughters through the trials he allows to enter their lives?

Paul rejoiced that the gospel continued to spread. He asked for the Philippians' prayers and was confident that through the power of the Spirit he would be victorious no matter what happened.

Philippians 1:20-30

Stand firm in the gospel

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 28-37)

Discuss

1. Paul said that he was confident that he would not be ashamed. What did he have in mind with the word *ashamed*?
2. Of what positive blessing was Paul confident?
3. When Paul considered the two possible outcomes of his imprisonment, which did he prefer?
4. How did Paul think his trial would end? Why?
5. What did Paul say the Philippians would do to “conduct [them]selves in a manner worthy of the gospel” (verse 27)?
6. What would the Philippians’ faith, perseverance, and courage provide to their enemies?

Apply

7. Agree or disagree: It is a blessing to suffer for Christ.
8. Evaluate your own life. Why would it be good if you died? What purpose does the Lord have in continuing to give you life?

Paul debated with himself whether he wanted to die or live. For the sake of his congregations, he was confident he would live and continue to serve them.

Philippians 2:1-11

Live in harmony and humility with one another

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 37-52)

Look

- Verse 1 *“If you have any encouragement . . . comfort . . . fellowship . . . tenderness and compassion”*—Paul uses an evangelical appeal with the expected answer, “Yes, of course we do.”
- Verse 6 *“Did not consider equality with God something to be grasped”*—Though Jesus Christ was and is God, equal to the Father in glory and majesty, he willingly set aside that majesty and glory. Rather than “grasping” it, he let go of it.
- Verse 9 *“God exalted [Christ].”* In his exalted state (beginning with his resurrection and continuing for all eternity), God exalted his Son so that Jesus now completely employs the fullness of his deity at all times.

Discuss

1. What comes from being united with Christ, being comforted by his love, and enjoying fellowship with the Spirit?
2. What example of humility did Paul place before the Philippians?
3. Trace the path Jesus walked to win our salvation. This was a humble path on which Jesus sought our good, not his own.

Apply

4. If the attitudes Paul describes in verses 1-4 are missing, what can happen in a Christian home? a Christian congregation? a Christian friendship?
5. How does verse 11 describe one way in which God is glorified in our lives?

Paul reminded the Philippians of the spiritual blessings they had received in Christ and then reminded them of Christ's humility, which won our salvation. These blessings guide and motivate Christians in their lives together.

Philippians 2:12-30

Live blameless lives in a godless world; words about Timothy and Epaphroditus

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 53-64)

Look

- Verse 12 *“But now much more in my absence”*—This was a wonderful compliment that Paul paid to the Philippians. It is one thing to serve the Lord when your spiritual father is watching you but quite another when he is far away in prison.
- Verse 25 *“I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus.”* Epaphroditus was a leader in the church at Philippi. The congregation had sent him bearing a gift to Paul. He was to serve Paul while he remained in chains for the gospel.

Discuss

1. Why does Paul tell the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling?
2. In what way do we Christians “shine like stars in the universe” (verse 15)?
3. How would the Philippians’ living as children of light be a blessing to Paul?
4. How did Timothy differ from many other associates who had been with Paul in Rome?
5. Why did Paul desire the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus, even though his time in Rome had been cut short?

Apply

6. Why do those who serve in foreign mission fields deserve our respect, gratitude, prayers, encouragement, and support?

Paul encouraged the Philippians to “shine like stars in the universe.” He would soon send Timothy and Epaphroditus to minister to them.

Philippians 3:1-11

Beware of every threat to gospel joy

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 64-74)

Look

Verse 2 *“Watch out for those dogs . . . those mutilators of the flesh.”* False teachers, commonly known as Judaizers, had infiltrated the church at Philippi. While they spoke of Jesus as the Savior, they also preached that to procure salvation it was necessary to keep ceremonial laws that God had given in the Old Testament. Thus they proclaimed salvation by works—a foreign, false gospel.

Discuss

1. In the midst of this cheerful letter, why do Paul's words become so vehement, calling certain people dogs?
2. The Judaizers claimed to be “the circumcision” (verse 3). Paul says that Christians are the ones who are really circumcised. Why?
3. Why did Paul give such a detailed description of his pre-Christ days of unbelief?
4. What was Paul willing to give up so that he could know Christ?
5. What was Paul's final goal in life?
6. In addition to Christ's righteousness, Paul wanted two things. What did he want? How are these two things related in our lives?

Apply

7. What is the value of repetition in hearing the truths of our faith?

Human righteousness means nothing. What matters is circumcision by the Spirit and knowing the power of Jesus' resurrection.

Philippians 3:12–4:1

Press onward to the heavenly goal

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 74-85)

Look

Verse 12 *“Not that I have already obtained all this.”* Though Paul had received God’s righteousness through faith in Christ, Paul recognized he was still a sinner who needed to press on toward holy living.

Discuss

1. From the standpoint of where he presently stood, how did Paul view his life and his goal?
2. How did Paul address you and me in regard to our present level of insight and dedication to reaching our goal? Do you find comfort in his words? If so, explain why.
3. Paul encourages us to model ourselves after those who live according to the pattern he gave us. Who are we to avoid?
4. What contrast does Paul strike between the people he describes in verses 18 and 19 and us?
5. What will Jesus someday do to our mortal bodies?

Apply

6. What value do we find in the lives of God’s people, especially in those of the mature Christians who have weathered life’s storms, who have shaped their lives around God’s Word and will, and who have been blessed by the Lord with a rich measure of spiritual insight?
7. Paul urges us to stand firm in the hope we have. How can we best prepare ourselves to run the race to eternal life?

Paul encourages us to press on toward the goal of eternal life, which God has placed before us.

Philippians 4:2-9

Let the peace of the gospel be evident in your lives

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 85-94)

Look

- Verse 2 *“Euodia and . . . Syntyche”*—They were two prominent women in the congregation who became involved in a dispute. We are not told what that dispute was.
- Verse 7 *“The peace of God, which transcends all understanding.”* The fullness of God's grace and the peace that results from that grace cannot be grasped by the mind but must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. (See Ephesians 3:16-19.)

Discuss

1. How did Paul propose that Euodia and Syntyche be reconciled? Paul here gives us a pattern of Christian encouragement.
2. The Lord is near. That's why Paul encouraged the Philippians to put on certain virtues and act in certain ways. List the things Christians should do in light of the fact that the Lord is near.
3. What did Paul encourage the Philippians to think about? Why?

Apply

4. Agree or disagree: Members of the church will never disagree with one another. Why?
5. What is God's solution to disagreements among Christians?

Paul encouraged the church to help two women in the congregation not to argue but to work together in service to the Lord. He encouraged the whole congregation to rest in the Lord and live in a spirit of prayer as they went about their day-to-day lives.

Philippians 4:10-23

Joyful thanks for gifts of love

(The People's Bible, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, pages 95-101)

Look

- Verse 10 *"You had no opportunity to show it."* Perhaps on account of Paul's tenuous circumstances in Rome or their lack of a candidate to send to Paul or poverty in Philippi, the Philippians were not initially able to aid Paul.
- Verse 20 *"Be glory"*—This is an appropriate way to end any discussion about the Christian faith. The glory for everything that has been accomplished belongs to God.
- Verse 22 *"Those who belong to Caesar's household"*—Evidently some members of Caesar's household had come to faith. By exchanging greetings, Paul strengthened Christian fellowship.

Discuss

1. What was Paul's "secret of being content" (verse 12)?
2. On Paul's second missionary journey, he first preached the gospel in Philippi. Then he went to Thessalonica, where he experienced bitter persecution. He then went to Berea, and hostile Jews from Thessalonica pursued him there. Finally, he left for Rome. How had the Philippians helped Paul during this difficult time?
3. Why did Paul value these gifts from the Philippians? (verses 17,18)
4. How would God reward the Philippians' generosity?

Apply

5. Paul said, "I have learned to be content" (verse 11). What comfort do we find in this?
6. What do you think is more dangerous to our faith, having too much or too little? Why?

Paul concluded his letter to the Philippians by thanking them for their gifts and, in the process, explaining his contentment in any situation and his joy over the fruits of their faith.