

# PHILIPPIANS

Sermon Date	Psalm	Theme	Lesson Number
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September 13	Philippians 1:1-11	Intro/Thanksgiving	Lesson 1
September 20	Philippians 1:12-30	Rejoicing in Chains	Lesson 2
September 27	Philippians 2:1-11	The Humble Mind of Christ	Lesson 3
October 4	Philippians 2:12-30	God Works in You	Lesson 4
October 11	Philippians 3:1-11	To Know Christ	Lesson 5
October 18	Philippians 3:12-4:1	Press On	Lesson 6
October 25	Philippians 4:2-9	When in a Fix	Lesson 7
November 1	Philippians 4:10-23	All Things Through Christ	Lesson 8

## PHILIPPIANS - INTRODUCTION

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In the simplest of descriptions, Philippians is a letter, written by the Apostle Paul, to a church. But there is so much more to this rich letter, enough that we will spend eight weeks studying it this fall. In Acts 16, we read that the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from preaching in Asia, so he made his way to Troas, where he was summoned in a vision to go to Macedonia. He lands in Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia and a Roman colony, situated at the edge of a fertile plain. Philippi was a small city of around 10,000 people and was important as an agricultural center where grain and wine were produced. The story from Acts 16 is one that would be helpful to read as background as you begin study of Philippians.

Paul encourages the Philippians to have Christian unity and joy, and the tone of the letter is one of joy, with the word joy or some derivative appearing many times throughout the letter. And – amazing – this positive letter was written while Paul was in prison in Rome! One commentator has titled Philippians 1 as “Joy in Living,” Philippians 2 as “Joy in Service,” Philippians 3 as “Joy in Fellowship,” and Philippians 4 as “Joy in Rewards.”

Paul writes to reassure his readers of his own situation, to explain why Epaphroditus is returning to Philippi and not staying with Paul, and to thank the Philippians for their gift to him. In addition to joy, another key theme in the letter is fellowship, the Greek word is *koinonia*. A key expression, “in Christ,” appears multiple times, as does two other significant words, grace and gospel. Overall, the letter emphasizes Christology, helping us to understand who Jesus is and what He has did. As we continue to live through the 2020 Pandemic, may our fellowship and our life together in community be characterized by joy in Christ, through the power of the Gospel!

In this study, we will again be using the Inductive Method of Bible Study as we did with our Summer 2020 short study on the Psalms. A guide sheet is attached for each lesson to help you work through this method of study. If you are part of a small group, working through the sheet ahead of time will allow your group time to be richer as all are able to share. If you are studying alone, the guide sheet will help you to work through the passage, prepare to hear the sermon, and apply the passage’s teaching to your life. A family page is included with each lesson as well.

The inductive method of Bible study is a tool for learning to read and study Scripture. By following three simple steps, observation, interpretation, and application, this method of study provides a means to evaluate a passage of scripture, what it says, what it meant to the original audience, and what it means today.

As you read each of the passages in this study, it is helpful to read the passage multiple times, even once out loud as it is good to hear the richness of the language as you speak it. First **observe** what the text is saying. Here, you are simply gathering facts, using the six basic questions: who, what, when, where, why and how. Make note of words that are repeated within the passage, anything that can be put into a list, words that indicate a change in topic or time, words that contrast one thing against another, and words that indicate cause and effect.

Second, **interpret** the passage to discover what is being communicated. It's helpful to have a study Bible with notes or a commentary for this step. Some things to consider in studying the epistles (letters) in general:

- Who wrote the letter, and to whom did they write?
- What is the cultural and/or historical context?
- What else do I know about the passage, author, and broader context of the passage? What is the author's prior relationship with the recipients?
- What does the letter tell us about the recipients?
- What other Scripture passages might help me better interpret this one?
- What concerns does the letter respond to?
- What are the logical divisions of the letter?
- Have I overlooked anything or made any assumptions?
- What is the clearest meaning of this text? Passages sometimes include figurative language and imagery but not as much as the psalms. Always start with the obvious interpretation first.
- How does the letter connect back to the Gospels and the broader message/themes of the Bible?

Also, make sure you write down any questions you have about the passage or any confusing terms so that you can return to them in your group time or reach out to one of the pastors for clarification.

As we **apply** Paul's letter to the church in Philippi to our lives, the main question to ask is this: based on what you've observed and interpreted, what does the passage mean to you personally, for your life, priorities, and decisions?

#### **NOTE:**

- The passage printed in the family section is from the New International Readers Version of scripture, a translation that is "family-friendly." It is helpful, however, for participants in small group studies to have other versions of the Bible available to compare and contrast wording.
- The elements of the Inductive Bible Study method were taken from websites for Logos and Navigators, two respected Bible commentators, <https://www.logos.com/how-to/inductive-bible-study> and <https://www.navigators.org/resource/inductive-bible-study/>. Questions relating specifically to studying the epistles were taken from [www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/inductive.pdf](http://www.pas.rochester.edu/~tim/study/inductive.pdf).
- Because we are living in an unusual time, this study will be published on the MLEPC.org website for everyone to access remotely and print copies at home. However, we would be glad to print and send hard copies to those who need one, just call the church office, 412-531-3387, and we will make sure you receive a copy.

LESSON 1 Week of September 13, 2020

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 – INTRODUCTION/THANKSGIVING

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**Observe Philippians 1:1-11 (What does it say?)**

Who is the letter written to, and how are they described?

Who else is mentioned in these verses?

What is the passage about?

Do any of words or themes mentioned in the introduction - joy, fellowship, in Christ, grace and gospel - appear in this passage?

Are there any geographic points of reference?

**Interpret Philippians 1:1-11 (What does it mean?)**

Write down and then answer any questions you have about the reading or any confusing terms.

What is the clearest meaning of this text?

Where do we Paul's understanding of Christ in this passage (Christology)?

How does the passage connect back to the Gospels and the broader message/themes of the Bible?

**Application of Philippians 1:1-11 (What does it mean for you?)**

As mentioned in the Introduction, a commentator titles Chapter 1 as "Joy in Living." How do you see Paul living with joy in this chapter?

The letter to the Philippians is characterized by joy and unity. What in this passage speaks to you of joy? Of unity? Where do you find joy and unity in church (MLEPC or any church)?

What specific theme from this passage speaks to you?

What verse or phrase in this passage is specifically helpful to you in this season of life? Why?

Based on your time spent with this passage, what does it mean for your life, priorities, and decisions?

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## PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 FOR FAMILIES

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Read Philippians 1:1-11 below.

### **Philippians 1:1-11 (New International Reader's Version)**

1 We, Paul and Timothy, are writing this letter. We serve Christ Jesus. We are sending this letter to you, all God's holy people in Philippi. You belong to Christ Jesus. We are also sending this letter to your leaders and deacons.

2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

### **Paul Prays and Gives Thanks**

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 I am happy because you have joined me in spreading the good news. You have done so from the first day until now. 6 God began a good work in you. And I am sure that he will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you. I love you with all my heart. I may be held by chains, or I may be standing up for the truth of the good news. Either way, all of you share in God's grace together with me. 8 God is my witness that I long for all of you. I love you with the love that Christ Jesus gives.

9 I pray that your love will grow more and more. And let it be based on knowledge and understanding. 10 Then you will be able to know what is best. Then you will be pure and without blame for the day that Christ returns. 11 You will be filled with the fruit of right living produced by Jesus Christ. All these things bring glory and praise to God.

The Apostle Paul writes, "we serve Christ Jesus." How does your family serve Jesus?

Paul writes in verse 3, "I thank my God every time I remember you." Think about those in your life that you are thankful for. What makes them so special?

Paul says that he prays with joy. What would cause you to pray with joy? What words would you use?

Paul loves the people of Philippi with his whole heart. Think about the people you love. What does it mean to love someone with your whole heart?

Paul then says he loves with the love that Christ Jesus gives. What is special about the love that Jesus gives? Talk about some Bible stories where Jesus shows love to people in a special way.