

## Supplemental Materials - Living Out the Life of Christ 10 Weeks in Philippians

Hello Leaders!

Welcome to a new season of Life Groups at The Journey. Thank you all so very much for being willing to serve the Lord and the people of your groups in this way. In this document you are going to find some supplemental materials to help you prepare for each week of your group. This season we are studying the book of Philippians. We are big fans of BibleProject and they have a great video summary of the book that we recommend you watch to get familiar with the overall content of this particular letter from Paul.

I would just add a couple of things to what you will learn in the video. This is actually one of my favorite Epistles in the New Testament. For a couple of reasons:

1. The 2:6-11 passage might be some of the most beautiful, moving and theologically rich sections of Scripture ever written. Most Bible scholars believe this section was a poem or a hymn that already existed and was used in the churches of the time that Paul was quoting to drive home a point, knowing his audience would be familiar with it. Whether that is the case or not, this passage is the core of the letter. Paul is encouraging and challenging the people of Philippi to live out the life of Christ, using his own life as an example. And what this passage does is that it shows why Paul is living the way he is living. Why he is able to have joy while in prison, why he considers everything as a loss for the sake of knowing Christ. It is because of what Christ did for him. His life is a response to the love and grace he has encountered in Jesus.
2. The context of the letter. Paul is in prison (probably in Rome), awaiting trial, and knows that he might not make it out alive. The letter is actually a thank you note to the church in Philippi for sending him some money they collected to help him while he was under arrest. However, the person that brought the money, Epaphroditus, who some think was the pastor of the church, got really sick while visiting Paul and almost died, and that news got back to the people in Philippi. So this church has its founder in jail, and its current pastor on his deathbed, and they are very discouraged. So Paul, who has been under arrest for two years, is awaiting trial, and might die, is writing to encourage this congregation, calling them to rejoice! Can you see the irony in that? And yet, it is possible, precisely because Paul has rearranged his priorities and his ambitions and desires solely around Jesus. Because of this, there is nothing that can take away his joy. I have always found that so moving and encouraging, particularly when I'm going through difficult times, or when I am tempted by materialism and consumerism.

As you study every week and prepare to guide your group, remember these three elements: How God's love has been demonstrated through the self-emptying and sacrifice of Jesus, how we live in a world of profound suffering and difficulty, and how we can have joy in the midst of it all precisely because of Christ's sacrifice. Those three core elements are all throughout the letter: Jesus, suffering, joy. And all of those elements are relevant to our lives and the lives of the people in your groups. We might not be in jail wondering if we are going to be executed, but we all know what it is to suffer. Chances are that some of the people in your groups might be going through a season of suffering and discouragement right now. And if we can point people to Jesus, to His self-emptying, humbling sacrifice, for our sake, and how this sacrificial act has changed everything; then we can also point people to a different life, with different priorities, and ambitions, a life centered around Jesus. And when we live like that, we can experience a type of joy that is impervious to whatever storms and difficulties the world throws at us.

The book of Philippians has been a favorite of mine to preach through for a long time. I think you are going to have a blast preparing and guiding your group discussions. More importantly though, I think you and your groups are going to be encouraged by the Holy Spirit during this season.

May we, like Paul, come to consider everything else a loss, for the surpassing joy of knowing Christ.

Grace + Peace

Joel

Context – Watch Bible Project summary of Philippians:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE9qqW1-BkU>

**Week 1: The Life of Christ**  
**Passage: Philippians 2:1-11**

**Possible Icebreaker:** Who has been the best example of having a servant attitude in your life? Why does that person come to mind?

**Commentary:**

'made Himself of no reputation'. This is more clearly translated 'emptied Himself.' From this Greek word comes the theological word kenosis; i.e., the doctrine of Christ's self-emptying in His Incarnation. This was a self-renunciation, not an emptying Himself of deity nor an exchange of deity for humanity. Jesus did, however, renounce or set aside His privileges in several areas: (1) heavenly glory—while on earth He gave up the glory of a face-to-face relationship with God and the continuous outward display and personal enjoyment of that glory (John 17:5); (2) independent authority—during His Incarnation Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of His Father (Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; Heb. 5:8); (3) divine prerogatives—He set aside the voluntary display of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Spirit's direction (Matt. 24:36; John 1:45–49); (4) eternal riches—while on earth Christ was poor and owned very little (2 Cor. 8:9); and (5) a favorable relationship with God—He felt the Father's wrath for human sin while on the cross (Matt. 27:46) - *MacArthur Bible Commentary on Philippians 2:7*

**Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Romans 14:11
- Isaiah 45:22-25
- John 13:13-17

Questions to guide your study

- What are the character qualities that Paul is calling his readers to have in this passage?
- Is there an unhealthy approach to conforming to those qualities?
- Re-read verses 10-11. How do you feel when you read that? Excited or indifferent? Comfortable or uncomfortable? On that day, will you confess willingly and gladly or because you must?
- In verse 11, what is the meaning of: "Jesus Christ is Lord"?

## **Week 2: Sign of Life #1 – Abundant Fruit**

### **Passage: Philippians 1: 3-11**

**Possible Icebreaker:** Describe a time when you had to make a difficult change in your daily life?

#### **Commentary:**

work in you. Paul is confident not only of what God has done 'for' the readers in forgiving their sins but also of what he has done 'in' them (see v. 11). 'Work' refers to God's activity in saving them. day of Christ Jesus. His return, when their salvation will be brought to completion (see 1:10; 2:16; 1Co 1:8; 5:5; 2Co 1:14). It is God who initiates salvation, who continues it and who will one day bring it to its consummation. - *NIV Study Bible notes on Philippians 1:6*

#### **Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Romans 5:1-11

Questions to guide your study

- Looking back to when you first met Jesus, can you see a difference in how your life is now?
- In your own words, what is Paul's prayer for his readers?
- Over the past week, what "fruit of righteousness" (v. 11) have you seen produced in your life?

## **Week 3: Sign of Life #2 – Suffering with Hope**

**Passage: Philippians 1: 20-30**

### **Possible Icebreaker:**

What is something you hoped for and received after a long period of time?

### **Commentary:**

The word granted comes from the Greek term *charis*, often translated 'gift.' Believing in Jesus and receiving His salvation is a gift, but so is suffering for Him (Acts 5:41). Our trials keep us close to the Lord—humble in His presence and dependent upon His comfort, wisdom, and power. The truth is, we learn more in valley experiences than on the mountaintops because hardships teach us more about the nature and faithfulness of God. - *Charles F. Stanley, Life Principles Bible note on Philippians 1:29*

### **Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
- Daniel 3:16-18
- Psalm 9:18

Questions to guide your study

- What did Paul mean when he wrote "to live is Christ"?
- What suffering did the Philippian church experience?
- What suffering does the present day church experience?

## **Week 4: Sign of Life #3 – Being a Light**

**Passage: Philippians 2: 12-18**

### **Possible Icebreaker:**

What are the things you hear people complain about most? Why do they complain about those things?

### **Commentary:**

Many believers name Philippians as their favorite letter from Paul, for this personal correspondence to a group of close friends touches our hearts in many ways. Paul reminds his friends that although he is in prison, the gospel is not; God continues to work mightily in spite of Paul's difficult situation. He thanks them for their generous support and exhorts them to live a life worthy of the gospel. In addition, he stresses the importance of unity by highlighting the humility of Christ, which produces unity within the church. Paul warns the Philippians against trusting in their own righteousness and directs them to rely on Christ's righteousness on their behalf, challenging them to follow his example of forgetting the past and pressing on toward Christlikeness as they anticipate Christ's return. Along the way, Paul offers practical insight on Christian living, such as choosing to rejoice rather than worry and making peace instead of grumbling. - *The Baker Illustrated Guide to the Bible*

### **Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Deuteronomy 32:5 and 32:19-21

Questions to guide your study

- What does "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" mean to you?
- How does God "work in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"? How does he work in the church?
- What helps you to "do everything without grumbling or arguing"?

## **Week 5: Sign of Life #4 – Working Together**

**Passage: Philippians 2:19-30**

### **Possible Icebreaker:**

What is the greatest distance over which you have collaborated with other people? What made it work (or not?)

### **Commentary:**

It was beautiful when Christ put our interests above his own earthly comforts and died for us.

It was beautiful when Paul suffered every day to plant the churches that brought us the gospel.

It was beautiful when Timothy served side by side with Paul, putting the interests of others first.

It was beautiful when Epaphroditus risked his life to complete the Philippian service to Paul.

And it will be beautiful in your personal priorities and families and politics as God makes his wisdom grow up among us where the mind of Christ is so alive. - *John Piper's sermon 'The Mind of Christ: Looking Out for the Interests of Others'*

### **Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Philippians 2:3-5 (notice how Paul used similar words here and then when he wrote about Timothy)
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Questions to guide your study

- From Paul's description, what virtues did Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplify?
- Is verse 21 a praise for Timothy, a criticism of everyone else, or both?
- Where have you witnessed people serving together like Paul described in this passage?

## **Week 6: Sign of Life #5 – Freedom from the Law**

**Passage: Philippians 3:1–14**

### **Possible Icebreaker:**

Which is more important, the destination or the journey?

### **Commentary:**

These “dogs” and “people who do evil . . . mutilators” were very likely Judaizers—Jewish Christians who wrongly believed that it was essential for Gentiles to follow all the Old Testament Jewish laws, especially submission to the rite of circumcision, in order to receive salvation. Many Judaizers were motivated by spiritual pride. Because they had invested so much time and effort in keeping their laws, they couldn’t accept the fact that all their efforts couldn’t bring them a step closer to salvation.

Paul criticized the Judaizers because they looked at Christianity backward—thinking that what they did (circumcision—cutting or mutilating the flesh) made them believers rather than the free gift of grace given by Christ. What believers do is a result of faith, not a prerequisite to faith. This had been confirmed by the early church leaders at the Jerusalem council 11 years earlier (Acts 15). Who are the Judaizers of our day? They are those who say that people must add something else to simple faith. No person should add anything to Christ’s offer of salvation by grace through faith. - *Life Application Study Bible, note on Philippians 3:2-3*

### **Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Galatians 3:1-6
- Acts 15:1-35
- Acts 16:1-5

Questions to guide your study

- What does Paul consider a “loss” and “garbage” in verse 7 and 8?
- What was the goal that Paul was striving for?
- When have you focused more on rules than on the spirit behind the rules?



**Week 7: Sign of Life #6 – Eternal Focus**  
**Passage Philippians 3:12-21**

**Possible Icebreaker:**

What do you look forward to being able to do for eternity in heaven?

**Commentary:**

Sometimes trying to live a perfect Christian life can be so difficult that it leaves us drained and discouraged. We may feel so far from perfect that we think we can never please God with our life. Paul used perfection (3:12) to mean mature or complete, not flawless in every detail. Those who are mature should press on in the Holy Spirit's power, knowing that Christ will reveal and fill in any discrepancy between what we are and what we should be. Christ's provision is no excuse for lagging devotion, but it provides relief and assurance for those who feel driven. *Life Application Study Bible, note on Philippians 3:15-16*

**Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Romans 16:17-18
- Colossians 1:29
- 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Questions to guide your study

- What are the characteristics of someone who is "spiritually mature" (v. 15)?
- What does "their god is their stomach" (v. 19) mean?
- Does believing verses 20 and 21 help you in your daily life?

## **Week 8: Sign of Life #7 – Renewed Mind**

### **Passage: Philippians 4: 4-9**

#### **Possible Icebreaker:**

Which is more stressful: driving in DC during rush hour, a day at an amusement park with small children, moving, planning an event, or taking a college course?

#### **Commentary:**

“which surpasses all comprehension” ... has been interpreted in two ways:

- God's peace is better than human reason
- God's peace is beyond human reason

The parallel passage in Eph. 3:20 is helpful. God's ways are beyond our ways (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). An example of this peace that passes all human ability to understand is found in the life of Paul in this very chapter (cf. Phil. 4:11-13). The peace of God must be unconnected with circumstances and locked securely to the person and work of Christ.

"shall guard your hearts and your minds : God's peace acts as a soldier guarding believers. This same beautiful truth of God's garrisoning of His children can be seen in 1 Peter 1:4, 5. The two Greek terms "heart" (kardia) and "mind" (nous) are synonymous in speaking about the whole person (feeling and thinking). Paul emphasizes Christian thinking throughout this letter.

- *FreeBibleCommentary.org notes on Philippians 4:7*

#### **Additional resources:**

##### Related Passages

- Proverbs 3:5-6
- Psalm 1
- Matthew 6:25-34

##### Questions to guide your study

- List all of the instructions Paul gave in this passage (ex: “rejoice in the lord”).
- In your own words, what is the format for the prayer that Paul described in this passage? What is the promised response of such a prayer?
- List the things that Paul said to think about. Is there any one thing that can be identified by all of these descriptors?

**Week 9: Sign of Life #8 – Contentment**  
**Passage Philippians 4: 10-14**

**Possible Icebreaker:**

What is the most memorable vacation or day trip you have ever been on? What makes it so memorable?

**Commentary:**

I can do all things. Paul uses a Greek verb that means “to be strong” or “to have strength” (cf. Acts 19:16, 20; James 5:16). He had strength to withstand “all things” (vv. 11, 12), including both difficulty and prosperity in the material world. through Christ who strengthens me. The Greek word for strengthen means “to put power in.” Because believers are in Christ (Gal. 2:20), He infuses them with His strength to sustain them until they receive some provision (Eph. 3:16–20; 2 Cor. 12:10). - *MacArthur Bible Commentary note on Philippians 4:13*

**Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Psalm 18:32
- 1 Timothy 1:12-16

Questions to guide your study

- What is Paul’s “secret” of being content in every situation?
- How can you learn to be content in every circumstance?
- What are the things that Paul has been able to do through Christ?

**Week 10: Sign of Life #9 – Generosity**  
**Passage Philippians 4: 15-19**

**Possible Icebreaker:**

When have you received a gift or help at just the right time?

**Commentary:**

What makes money so magnetic and giving it away so stressful? Money measures our energy; it represents our day-to-day security. Giving money away puts our work and our futures at risk. Not every charity deserves your attention, and you're wise to scrutinize missionary appeals as well. But once you've determined that a project honors the Lord, don't hold back—give generously and joyfully. Like the Philippians, you'll be establishing an eternal partnership. - *Life Application Study Bible note on Philippians 4:15*

**Additional resources:**

Related Passages

- Hebrews 10:33-35
- Proverbs 3:9-10
- 2 Corinthians 9:7-11

Questions to guide your study

- Why do we give our resources to missionaries?
- In verse 17, what is credited to the believers' account?
- Do you believe verse 19 is true for you?