



PHILIPPIANS

the art of contentment



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

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PHILIPPIANS

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A five-week study of Paul's letter to the Philippians

Holly Furtick
and Eric Stanford

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“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. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 4:12-13

A NOTE FROM HOLLY

Welcome to a study on the book of Philippians: The Art of Contentment. I am so glad that you are here.

Did you know that the book of Philippians is a letter written from a jail cell? Paul was imprisoned while he penned this letter to the church at Phillippi, yet the majority of the contents of his writing is Paul's exhortation for joy and contentment in Christ.

I cannot wait for you to read this. Whether it is your first time reading this letter or you have read it many times, I believe that God will speak specifically to your heart in this season of your life.

This study will provide you with context but not commentary. It is purposefully designed to be a space for you to read the Word of God and let it speak to you, and then hopefully, give you a few things to discuss with others along the same journey.

It is a short study (only five weeks)! And while you absolutely can do it on your own, it is best experienced with others.

So how do you make the most of this study?

- Set aside time each day (four days a week) to read and reflect on the scripture. We have divided it up so that you will read one chapter per week, but we have also provided ancillary scriptures and readings to provide more context and insight into the passage.

- Use the space provided to write out what God is speaking to you each day. I find that when I make myself write something down, I come to a more specific conclusion than if I just “think about it.”
- Attend your group meetings ready to discuss what God has been speaking to you. There is nothing more comforting than realizing you are not alone in your doubts, your struggles, and your insecurities.

I am praying for you that as you read through this book you would hear God speak to your specific situations through the daily readings. God is always speaking—we are the ones who must set aside time in the middle of our busy lives to attune our ears to His voice.

Are you open? Are you committed? Let’s go!

Love,
Holly



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Art of Contentment is a Bible study workbook on the letter to the Philippians that you can use both individually and as part of a group. It's designed for a five-week program—an introductory week and four study weeks.

Before starting the study, spend a few minutes with “About Paul and His Letter” on pages 9-19. These short readings provide helpful insight about the book of Philippians—including themes, outlines, timelines, and maps—as well as more information about Paul.

The weeks of this study are numbered according to your group meeting. Week 1 is a session to just get to know your group and watch an introduction video from Holly. You'll start reading Philippians in Week 2. Every week from then on, you'll come back to the group to discuss the reading you did for that same week in the study. (e.g., You would read Week 2 of the study before attending your Week 2 group meeting.) You'll also watch a short video from Holly during group each week. If you missed a week or want to rewatch videos, you can access them at PhilippiansStudy.com (you may need to get a password from your group leader).

Weeks 2 – 4 provide prompts for four days of personal study and reflection, and each of these days is arranged in four “R” steps:

- **Read:** In your own Bible or Bible app, read the selection from Philippians as well as two or three other, related Bible passages.

- **Review:** What do you observe about the Philippians passage? Ask yourself, What are the key words and main ideas I find in the passage? What light do the related passages shine on the Philippians passage?
- **Relate:** Consider some ways you think this passage could apply in today's world. How is it relevant to you and to others you know? Look for timeless principles as well as connections to timely events.
- **Respond:** Prayerfully decide if God might be calling you to an action step as a response to what you've discovered. In other words, what are you going to start doing, stop doing, or change in your life in reaction to what you've read? Each day, you'll also find suggested devotional reading passages from Psalms and the Old Testament wisdom books.

Once a week, there's a fifth "R":

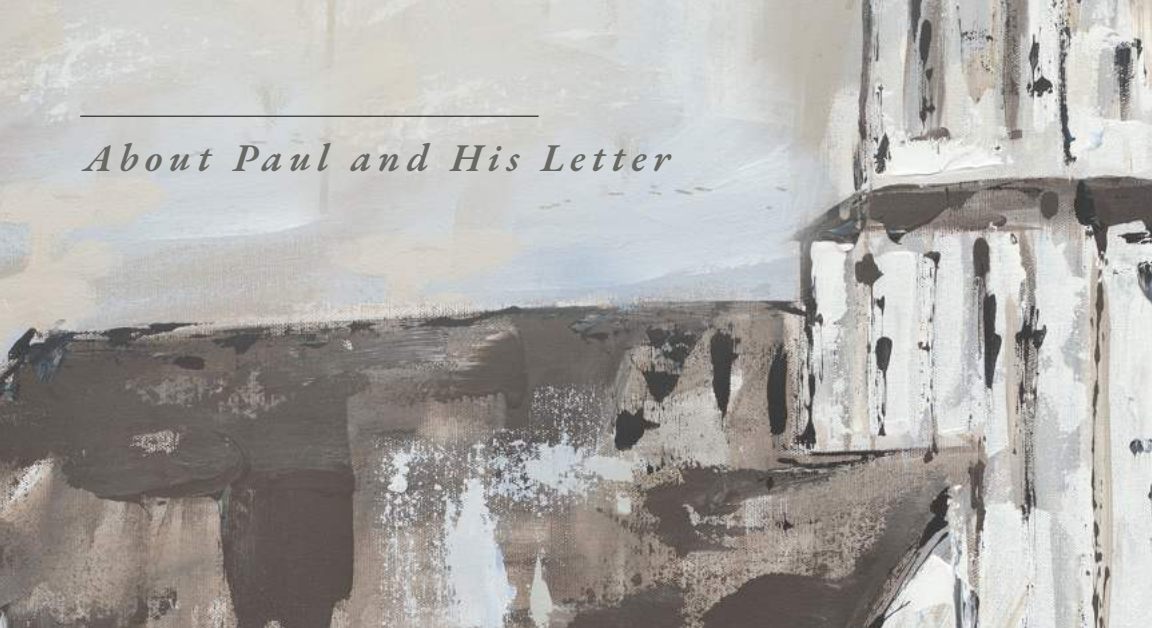
- **Recite:** Write down the week's memory passage to make sure you've got it.

Throughout the study are additional readings that are meant to provide context and a deeper understanding of the daily readings. If you're able, dig into these! They are so helpful in understanding and personalizing the Philippians passages. Included with each reading are two to three questions; make the most of each one by using these questions to reflect on what you read.

You can find additional resources at PhilippiansStudy.com or email PhilippiansStudy@elevationchurch.org for more information.



About Paul and His Letter



A LETTER

of Contentment and Joy

If any of the apostle Paul's letters can be said to breathe peace, joy, and satisfaction, the letter to the Philippians is it. Here is the mature apostle encouraging one of his most faithful churches to go on and pursue the fullness of the character of Christ in all confidence. What could be better?!

The date of writing was in or about the year AD 62. The apostle had been incarcerated for around five years on a vague charge of religious troublemaking. He was in Rome, living in his own rented home and able to receive visitors but chained to a guard. A final judgment in his case was coming soon, and Paul knew it was possible he would be convicted and executed, but he considered it more likely that the legalities would be resolved in his favor.

Paul used his time under house arrest to preach the gospel to both Gentiles and Jews in Rome whenever he got the chance. But at the same time, he was also like a mother hen to the churches he'd planted around the eastern Mediterranean—he was always praying for them and wanting to keep in touch with them and provide encouragement and guidance.

The church at Philippi, in northern Greece, had sent a representative—Epaphroditus—with some gifts to make life in house arrest easier for Paul. Epaphroditus had stayed with Paul as a helper for a while, but now it was time for Paul to send him home. This gave Paul the perfect opportunity to send a letter to the church at Philippi.

Dictating the letter to his friend Timothy, Paul had several things he wanted to get across to the Philippians:

- He wanted them to know that, even though he was wearing chains, he was at peace because he sensed that he was right where he was meant to be in the will of God.
- He urged the church to stand firm when they, too, were persecuted for the sake of Christ—to be humble and obedient to Christ, to resist letting their faith degenerate into legalism, to seek unity, and to keep their thoughts set on higher, heavenly things.
- He told them that he had reached a stage where he was content whether he had much or little. Nevertheless, he thanked them for the gifts they'd sent, because it was a sign of their love and faith.

The letter to the Philippians shows us that God wasn't done with either the apostle or the Philippian believers. Although these early Christians faced challenges, and would face still more in the years to come, they could rest in the assurance that God was with them and was looking after them. That's a truth the followers of Jesus need to relearn in every generation. It gives us peace regardless of our situations.

PHILIPPIANS

Under a Microscope

I. Opening (1:1-11)

A. Greeting (1:1-2)

B. Thanksgiving and Prayer (1:3-11)

1. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

2. Prayer (1:9-11)

II. Paul and the Philippian Church (1:12-2:18)

A. Paul's Imprisonment and Preaching of Christ (1:12-18a)

B. Paul's Expectation of Living (1:18b-26)

C. Paul's Encouragement for the Philippian Church to Stand Firm (1:27-30)

D. Paul's Encouragement for the Philippian Church to Be Humble and Obedient (2:1-18)

1. A Call to Humility (2:1-4)

2. Jesus's Example of Humility (2:5-11)

3. A Call to Obedience (2:12-18)

III. News About Travelers (2:19-30)

A. Paul's Plan to Send Timothy (2:19-24)

B. Paul's Sending Back Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

IV. Putting Christ First (3:1-4:1)

A. Warning about the Judaizers (3:1-2)

B. Paul's Changed Way of Life (3:3-14)

C. A Call to Follow Paul's Example (3:15-4:1)

V. Brief Final Topics (4:2-9)

A. Addressing a Personal Dispute (4:2-3)

B. Joy and Peace (4:4-7)

C. How to Think and Live (4:8-9)

VI. Gratitude for the Gifts (4:10-20)

A. Paul's Contentment (4:10-13)

B. Thanks for the Philippians' Gifts (4:14-20)

VII. Final Greetings and Closing (4:21-23)



AN UNLIKELY MISSIONARY

When Jesus was a young child living in Nazareth, another Jewish boy, named Saul, was born in Tarsus, an important Roman town in what is today southern Turkey. Saul—who is better known by his Latin name, Paul—probably never met Jesus in the flesh. But arguably, Paul would in time become a more influential apostle (“sent one”) than even the disciples whom Jesus gathered about Him during His lifetime on earth. You would never have expected this if you’d met Paul as a young man.

Early in his life, Paul was very serious about his Judaism. Although he was born outside of Israel and possessed Roman citizenship, his parents were Jewish, and he may have spent much of his childhood and youth in Jerusalem. He studied under one of the most influential rabbis of his day—Gamaliel. He belonged to the legalistic Pharisee party, and while still a young man, he was a member of the Sanhedrin, or Jewish ruling council. He later would recall, “I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Galatians 1:14).

Then Jesus happened.

The man who would become known for his missionary journeys started out with the intention of making persecution journeys, tracking down Christian Jews who had fled Jerusalem and arresting them. But then, in about AD 35, the risen and ascended Jesus intervened, knocking Paul off his high horse and saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). The persecutor of Christians became a Christian himself, stunning everybody—Paul most of all! He called himself “one abnormally born” (1 Corinthians 15:8), that is, an apostle added later and in a different way from the others.

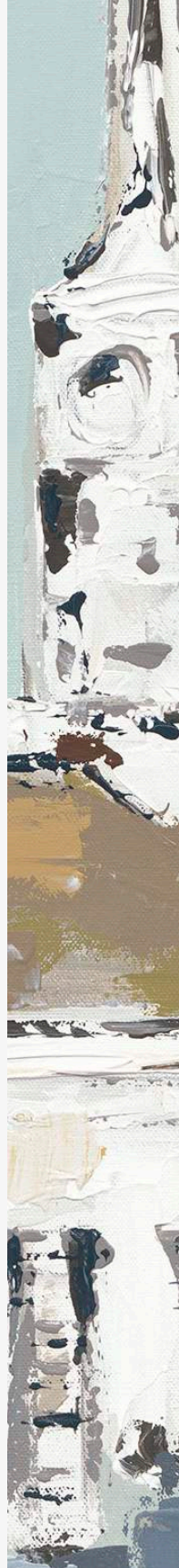
After the dramatic conversion, several years passed which we don’t know much of Paul’s activities. He spent part of that time in his hometown of Tarsus and part of it in Arabia, and he took a trip to Jerusalem. He may have worked as a tentmaker. We don’t have any knowledge that he was ever married or had children. He did, however, have members of an extended family that he kept in touch with.

Then around AD 46, having been called by God as an apostle to the Gentiles, he began a series of missionary journeys into Gentile (non-Jewish) areas. The book of Acts records three missionary journeys, during the second of which, in about AD 50, Paul founded the church in Philippi. In about AD 57, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. He appealed his case to Caesar, and his imprisonment was nearing an end in AD 62 when he wrote the letter to the Philippians.

It's believed he was freed and traveled to Spain and other areas before being re-arrested, sentenced to death, and thrown into Rome's dismal Mamertine Prison around AD 67 or 68. In his final letter, this unlikely missionary wrote, "The time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Where to find the life of Paul in the Bible:

- Galatians 1:11-2:21 – Paul's own account of his life
- Acts 7:58; 8:1-3 – Paul's life as a persecutor
- Acts 9:1-30 – Paul's conversion
- Acts 11:25-30; 12:25 – Paul participates in a famine relief effort
- Acts 13-14 – Paul goes on his first missionary journey
- Acts 15:1-35 – Paul participates in the Jerusalem council
- Acts 15:36-18:22 – Paul goes on his second missionary journey
- Acts 18:23-21:16 – Paul goes on his third missionary journey
- Acts 21:17-28:31 – Paul arrested, tried, and transferred to Rome





STRUCK BY JESUS LIGHTNING

In the movie *Amazing Grace*, the aging John Newton, former slaver, says, “Although my memory’s fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” The apostle Paul could have said the same thing—and in fact he did, many times, just not in those exact words.

The great turning point in his life was his conversion to faith in Jesus, described no fewer than five times in scripture.

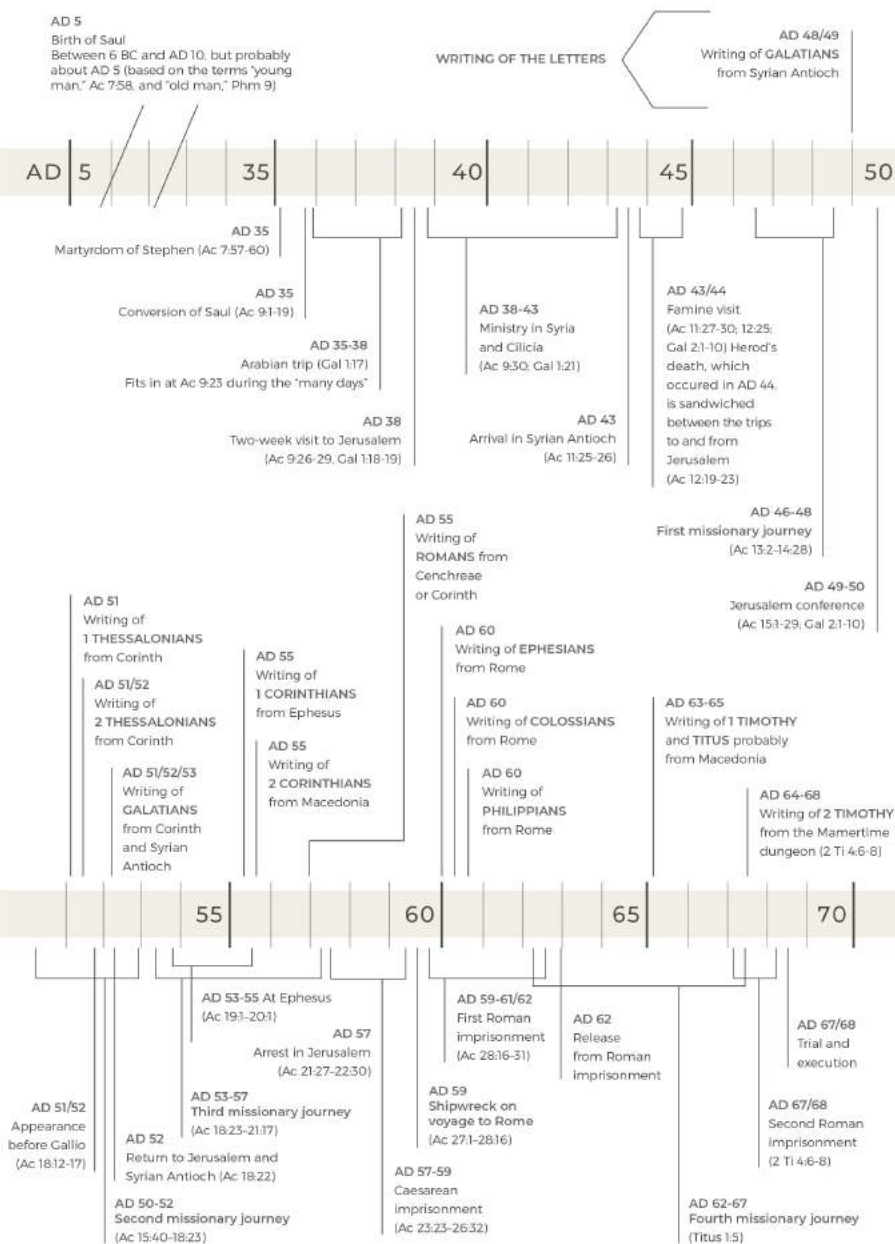
- Acts 9:1-30
- Acts 22:1-21
- Acts 26
- Galatians 1:11-24
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Paul’s conversion story emphasizes that he started out as a religious legalist and zealous persecutor of the church. While he was on the road to Damascus to expand his persecution efforts, Jesus struck him down and temporarily blinded him. Later he was filled with the Holy Spirit and commissioned to preach Jesus to the world.

It’s evident that Paul eagerly told this story both to non-Christians, as a challenge for them to consider trusting in Christ themselves, and to other Christians, as a reminder of Christ’s amazing grace. Because of what happened on the road to Damascus, Paul could never forget that he was a great sinner and Christ was a great Savior.

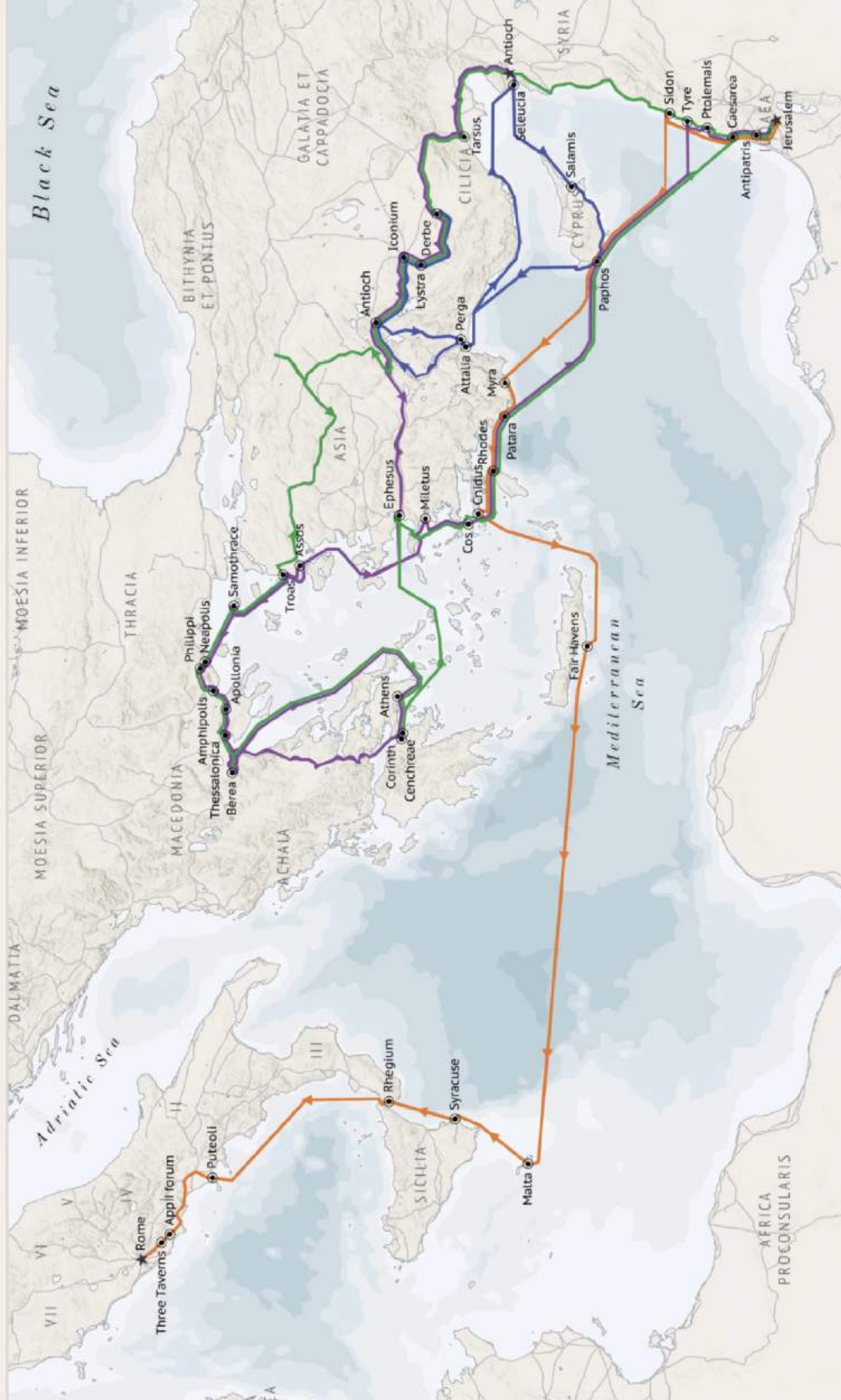
TIMELINE OF PAUL'S LIFE

Lines, brackets, and dotted lines help show sequence of events but are not meant to point to precise months or days within a given year, since exact dating is difficult.



THE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS OF PAUL

FIRST SECOND THIRD ROME



An abstract painting with a textured, canvas-like surface. The background is composed of various shades of blue, beige, brown, and white, with visible brushstrokes and layered colors. A large, vertical white rectangle is centered on the page, containing the text.

WEEK ONE

An Introduction to Philippians

It's important to remember the Bible book we call "the letter to the Philippians" started out as an actual letter. This letter was carried from Rome to Philippi and was read out loud to its original recipients, the Christians in Philippi.

If you have time before your first group meeting, sit down and read it all the way through without stopping just as the people at the church in Philippi would have. You'll be studying the letter piece by piece in the upcoming weeks.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Week One

Video teachings can be found at PhilippiansStudy.com

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

(Take a few minutes to answer these questions before discussing them with your group.)

What do you think is the difference between contentment and complacency?

What is one area of your life where you need more contentment?

Who is a person in your life that models contentment?



GET TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

Use the space below to write down the names and contact information of the members in your group.

NAME

CONTACT



WEEK TWO

Philippians 1

WEEKLY MEMORY PASSAGE

“This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ Jesus—to the glory and praise of God.”

Philippians 1:9-11

WEEK TWO

day one

READ

- Philippians 1:1-11

ADDITIONAL READING

- Acts 16 – Paul’s visit to Philippi
- Romans 6:1-14 – Becoming instruments of righteousness

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about progress in godliness from Psalm 1 and Proverbs 9:10.

PHILIPPI: A CITY OF MIRACLES

There was one city where God so wanted to plant the gospel that He intervened directly to send the apostle Paul there—Philippi.

According to Acts 16, in about AD 50, the Holy Spirit blocked the apostle from going where he had been planning to go and instead gave him a vision that he should cross over to Macedonia. The first city in the region of Macedonia where Paul started a church was Philippi. It was located in northern Greece, making it the first Christian church in Europe.

Philippi was a Roman colony at the base of a range of hills, with a large plain to the west. It was on one of the major Roman roads and had a lot of wealth, partly due to gold mining in the area.

Usually Paul, when he entered a new town on his missionary journeys, would first go to the Jewish synagogue, but Philippi apparently did not have a synagogue. So here Paul first shared the gospel with a wealthy Jewish widow named Lydia, whom he met while she was praying beside the Gangites River that passes near Philippi.

While in Philippi, Paul was pestered by a slave girl until Paul cast out the demon that was in her. For this, Paul and his companion Silas were flogged and thrown into the local prison.

In one of the remarkable examples of his ability to be joyful in the midst of trials, Paul and Silas sang hymns in the middle of the night while stuck in jail. Just then, an earthquake broke open the prison. Treated with kindness by Paul, the jailer became a believer that night.

Paul had to leave Philippi soon after this, but he kept in contact with the church and passed through it on at least one other occasion (Acts 20:6). The letter to the Philippians shows how the church had taken root and was maturing in this important city.

What do you know about the history of your local church? How would you describe the church's unique culture?

What's your role in helping to spread the gospel to your community and beyond?

WEEK TWO

day two

READ

- Philippians 1:12-18a

ADDITIONAL READING

- Acts 28:16-31 – Paul under arrest in Rome
- 2 Corinthians 11:16-33 – Paul’s history of suffering for Christ

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

○ Read more about salvation for the world from Psalm 67 and Proverbs 28:13.

THE PHILIPPIANS REPRESENTATIVE

In the backstory of Philippians, the church at Philippi had collected gifts to help Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome. They had sent their gifts with one of their own church members, Epaphroditus. But he was more than just a courier. Paul called him “my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier,” suggesting they participated in ministry together (Philippians 2:25).

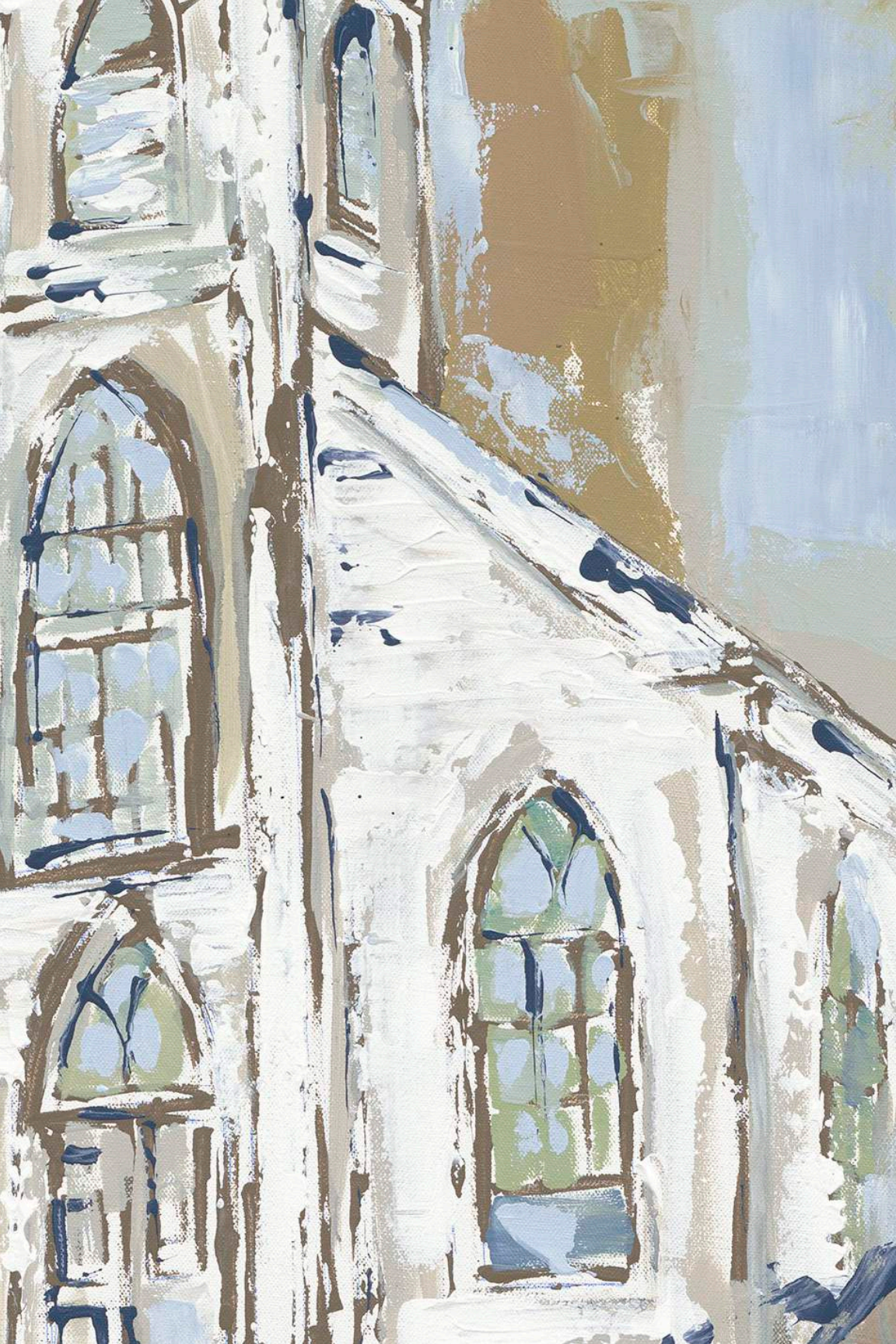
Epaphroditus had become sick while in Rome, and the Philippian Christians had heard about this, causing them to worry. Therefore, when Epaphroditus recovered, Paul decided to send him back home to ease the minds of his friends. That gave Paul an opportunity to write a letter to the church—a letter that made it into the New Testament as the letter to the Philippians.

Epaphroditus was the letter bearer. The treasure Epaphroditus carried back with him from Rome was worth far more than the gifts he took with him to Rome in the first place.

In a sense, Epaphroditus's journey to Rome was what we call a "short-term mission trip." If you have been on a trip like that yourself, what was the impact on you and others?

How can you support others in ministry?





And this is my prayer: that your
love may abound more and more
in knowledge and depth of insight,
so that you may be able to discern
what is best and may be pure and
blameless for the day of Christ,
filled with the fruit of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ
—to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

WEEK TWO

day three

READ

- Philippians 1:18b-26

ADDITIONAL READING

- Luke 21:12-19 – Jesus warns of persecution
- 2 Timothy 4:6-18 – Paul’s appeal to Timothy as he neared death

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

○ Read more about life and death from Psalm 90:1-12 and Proverbs 12:28.

THE JOYFUL CAPTIVE

The letter to the Philippians could be the most joyful book in the Bible. (Notice how many times the words *joy* and *rejoice* appear in it.) Yet, amazingly this letter was written by a prisoner in chains!

The apostle Paul was in jails and prisons many times, usually for a short period of time (including once in Philippi itself) but sometimes for longer. In Philippians, several times he mentions that he was writing this letter while “in chains” (1:7, 13, 14, 17). Since he refers to the “palace guard” (1:13) and “Caesar’s household” (4:22), clearly he was in Rome. Most likely, this was the imprisonment described at the end of the book of Acts.

Acts 21 – 28 tells how Paul was arrested at the Jerusalem temple in May of AD 57—and five years later was still a prisoner. From AD 60 to 62, he was in Rome because he had appealed his case to Emperor Nero. As a Roman citizen, he got better treatment than some other captives while waiting for his hearing. He was under house arrest, chained to a guard but free to entertain visitors—and to write mail. It was during his house arrest that he wrote Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Colossians.

The last sentence of Acts says that Paul, while under house arrest in Rome, “proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!” Even though the first chapter of Philippians makes it clear that the death penalty was a real possibility for Paul, we sense the excitement he had at being able to share the gospel with many. He declared, “I will continue to rejoice” (1:18).

Give an example of a time when you were able to have joy in the midst of trouble because of Christ in you.

Right now, in what ways are you struggling or feeling hindered or diverted from what you want to be doing? How might God be giving you some unexpected opportunities to serve Him in these circumstances?



WEEK TWO

day four

READ

- Philippians 1:27-30

ADDITIONAL READING

- Acts 13:44-51; 14:19-20; 17:5-9, 13-15; 19:23-41 – Some examples of persecution of Paul in Acts
- Romans 8:31-39 – Victory over opposition

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

○ Read more about standing firm from Psalm 57 and Proverbs 10:25.



RECITE

Write out this week's memory passage
(Philippians 1:9-11) from memory.

A large white rectangular area for writing the memory passage, centered on a dark teal background. The area is completely blank, intended for the user to write out the text from memory.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Week Two

Video teachings can be found at PhilippiansStudy.com

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

(Take a few minutes to answer these questions before discussing them with your group. You may want to refer to your own thoughts on this passage from pages 28-29.)

Share about a time that you were struggling and you had a friend who was truly praying for you.

Who is one person in your life that you reach out to this week and tell them that you are praying for them?

An impressionistic painting of a church tower and window. The tower is the central focus, rendered in shades of blue, white, and brown. The window is arched and filled with a mix of blue, orange, and white. The background is a mix of light and dark blue, suggesting a sky or a distant landscape. The style is loose and expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

WEEK THREE

Philippians 2

WEEKLY MEMORY PASSAGE

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Philippians 2:3-4

WEEK THREE

day one

READ

- Philippians 2:1-4

ADDITIONAL READING

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 – Paul as the “least of the apostles”
- 1 Timothy 1:12-17 – Paul as the “worst of sinners”

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about God's people bonding together from Psalm 22:22-31 and Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

WEEK THREE

day two

READ

- Philippians 2:5-11

ADDITIONAL READING

- Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:10-12 – Every knee will bow
- Romans 8:3-4 – God sent His Son
- Galatians 4:4-5 – Jesus' coming at the right time

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about humility from Psalm 131 and Proverbs 15:33.

CHRIST'S BIG MOVES

Ever wonder why Philippians 2:6-11 is printed in your Bible line by line, like poetry? That's because Bible scholars say it has the earmarks of being a Christian hymn that Paul incorporated into his letter. (Or maybe he composed it from scratch himself.) It gives a powerful, poetic overview of Christ's mission as Redeemer—one that required unequalled humility on His part.

From heaven to earth (Philippians 2:6-8)

The first half of the hymn talks about Christ giving up the privileges and prerogatives of heaven to become a human being for our sake. This is called the *incarnation*.

From earth back to heaven (Philippians 2:9-11)

The second half of the hymn describes the glory the Son has received from the Father for His obedience on earth. This is called *glorification*.

These are important themes that never lose their power; we still sing about them in churches today. For example, the classic hymn “Hallelujah! What a Savior!” speaks to both Christ's incarnation and His glorification. Hymns like this help us remember who Christ is and praise Him for His love for us.

HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOR!

Philip P. Bliss

1. "Man of Sor - rows," what a name for the Son of
2. Bear - ing shame and scoff - ing rude, in my place con -
3. Guilt - y, vile, and help - less, we; spot - less Lamb of
4. Lift - ed up was He to die; "It is fin - ished!"
5. When He comes, our glo - rious King, all His ran - somed

God, who came ru - ined sin - ners to re - claim!
demned He stood; sealed my par - don with His blood:
God was He; full a - tone - ment, can it be?
was His cry; now in heav'n ex - alt - ed high:
home to bring, then a - new this song we'll sing:

Hal - le - lu - jah! What a Sav - ior!

What do you see in Philippians 2:6-11 that challenges you as a Christ follower?

What do you see in Philippians 2:6-11 that moves you to want to praise Jesus?



del...



Do nothing out of selfish ambition or
vain conceit. Rather, in humility value
others above yourselves, not looking
to your own interests but each of you
to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4

WEEK THREE

day three

READ

- Philippians 2:12-18

ADDITIONAL READING

- Deuteronomy 32:5 – A warped and crooked generation
- Ephesians 3:7-13 – Paul’s call to preach to the Gentiles

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about obeying God from Psalm 128 and Ecclesiastes 12:13.



POURED OUT FOR OTHERS

The Philippian church was made up of people from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, but to some degree they would all have been familiar with the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament). So Paul knew he would be understood when he alluded to the Israelite sacrificial system, which in AD 62 was still going on every day at the Jerusalem temple.

There were two main types of sacrifices in Israel. The first were the expiation, or sin and guilt, offerings. These were intended to make atonement for sins and trespasses. The second were the consecration, or “pleasing odor,” offerings. They represented the personal commitment that was supposed to accompany the repentance expressed in the sin and guilt offerings.

Paul alluded to this second category of sacrifice twice in Philippians.

- In Philippians 2:17 he says that he was like a “drink offering” being poured out on the Philippians’ sacrifice and service. A drink offering was one type of consecration offering, a pouring out of wine on top of another sacrifice (Numbers 15:1-16; 28:7-9).
- In Philippians 4:18 Paul refers to the gifts the Philippians sent him as being “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”

Paul is saying that his arrest for the sake of the gospel was a “pleasing odor” sacrifice poured out on top of the Philippians’ generosity, and the opposite was true too—their generosity was a “pleasing odor” on top of his sacrifice.

Later in his letter to the Romans, Paul talks about offering our bodies as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

Today we may not understand the idea of drink offerings and fragrant offerings, but we make sacrifices every day as a part of our faith. We sacrifice our time, our finances, and often our preferences for the sake of the gospel. This is an act of worship and it is pleasing to God.

The writer of Hebrews said, “Through Jesus...let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (13:15-16).

Even though we no longer have to atone for our sins through actual sacrifices, what are some everyday, perhaps unseen, sacrifices you make as a believer?

Based on these verses, what are the results of the offerings we make?

What are some ways you sacrifice your time and money for others?

WEEK THREE

day four

READ

- Philippians 2:19-30

ADDITIONAL READING

- Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:5 – Timothy's background

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about godly friendship from Psalm 122 and Proverbs 17:17.

PAUL'S SPIRITUAL SON

The apostle Paul believed in the team approach to ministry. He usually had a few others with him when he journeyed to preach the gospel. The partner he spoke about with the most affection was a younger man named Timothy. “I have no one else like him,” Paul said (Philippians 2:20).

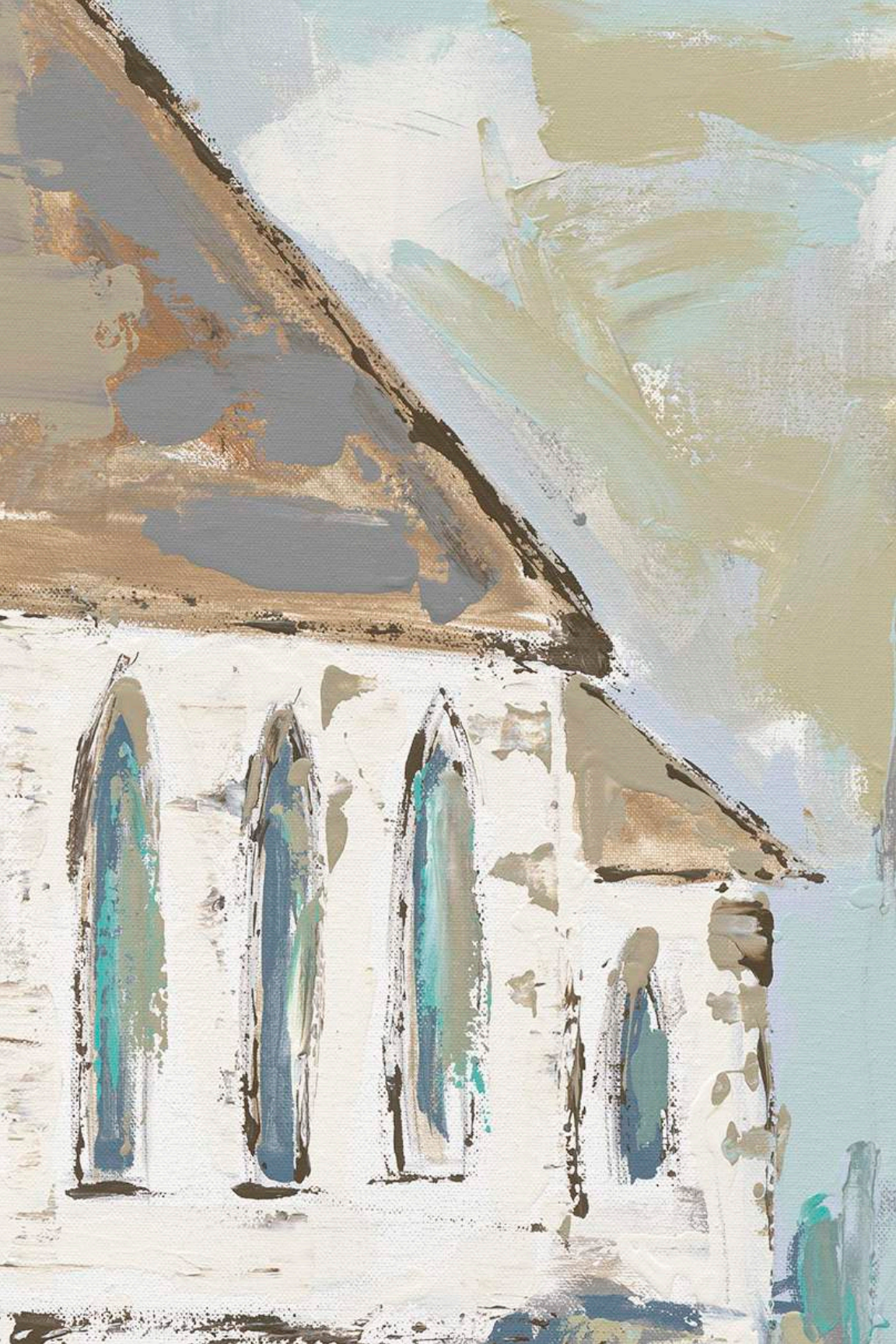
Timothy grew up in what is now southern Turkey, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. Since Paul referred to Timothy as his “son” (Philippians 2:22), Timothy probably became a Jesus follower under Paul’s influence. He seems to have had a timid nature (1 Corinthians 16:10-11) and weak health (1 Timothy 5:23). Yet he is mentioned repeatedly in Acts and in Paul’s letters, indicating that he traveled frequently with Paul.

Timothy was apparently with Paul the first time the apostle went to Philippi, AD 50 (Acts 16). He was with Paul again during Paul’s Roman imprisonment ten years later, and he co-wrote the letter to the Philippians (Philippians 1:1).

As someone whom Paul trusted deeply, and who was already a friend of the Philippians, Timothy was an obvious choice for Paul to send as his personal ambassador to the church of Philippi (Philippians 2:19-24).

In some ways, Timothy was an unlikely candidate to become an important figure in the early church. What are some disabilities or weaknesses that you can overcome, by God's grace, to serve the Lord?

Have you had a mentor in the faith? How did that person impact your life?



RECITE

Write out this week's memory passage
(Philippians 2:3-4) from memory.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Week Three

Video teachings can be found at PhilippiansStudy.com

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

(Take a few minutes to answer these questions before discussing them with your group. You may want to refer to your own thoughts on this passage from pages 52-53.)

Why is humility in relationships hardest with the ones we love most?

What is one specific change you can make in order to have better unity in your relationships?



WEEK FOUR

Philippians 3

WEEKLY MEMORY PASSAGE

“I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11

WEEK FOUR

day one

READ

- Philippians 3:1-6

ADDITIONAL READING

- Act 15:1-35 – The council of Jerusalem
- Galatians 3:1-5:12 – Faith versus works

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about joy from Psalm 100 and Proverbs 12:20.

PAUL'S TROLLS

Like many leaders, the apostle Paul had his trolls. Called Judaizers, they were Jewish Christians who would go where Gentiles (non-Jews) had been converted to faith in Jesus and would tell them that they had to follow Jewish practices, especially circumcision.

Approximately fourteen years before Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, the apostles in Jerusalem had worked out a compromise with this group that protected the gospel (Acts 15:1-31). But since then, the Judaizers had continued to follow in Paul's footsteps and teach Gentile Christians that they had to live like Jews. Paul said, "The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12).

Practically the whole letter to the Galatians (probably written around ten years before Philippians) deals with the issues raised by the Judaizers. The apostle Paul saw their teaching as a return to the law, instead of faith in Christ, as the basis for salvation.

In AD 62, the Judaizers were still causing problems. When Paul warned the Philippians against them, he didn't try to hide his feelings. He called them "dogs" (and he didn't mean cute pets!), "evildoers," and "mutilators of the flesh" (Philippians 3:2).

Why do you think Paul considered Judaizing such a serious problem?

What are some examples of how you have replaced faith with law (works) in your everyday life?





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.

Philippians 3:8

WEEK FOUR

day two

READ

- Philippians 3:7-11

ADDITIONAL READING

- 1 Corinthians 15:1-57 – Christ’s resurrection and ours
- Ephesians 1:17-23 – Knowing Christ and the power of the resurrection

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today’s Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

○ Read more about righteousness from Psalm 19:7-13 and Proverbs 21:21.

PAUL'S RELIGIOUS RÉSUMÉ

From a legalistic Jewish standpoint, Paul's credentials were unbeatable, as he said in Philippians 3:4-6.

“circumcised on the eighth day” (verse 5)

Circumcision had been the sign of belonging to the covenant people, the Israelites, ever since the time of Abraham (Genesis 17). Paul had been circumcised at eight days of age, exactly as Leviticus 12:3 commanded.

“of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews” (verse 5)

You could enter Judaism either by converting to it or (the preferred way) by being born into it. Paul was born into Judaism, even being able to trace his heritage specifically to the tribe of Benjamin.

“in regard to the law, a Pharisee” (verse 5)

The Pharisees were a group within Judaism who stressed obedience to the Hebrew laws as well as to the traditions of the rabbis. Jesus often criticized the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and their lack of true righteousness and love for God (see, for example, Matthew 23). Nevertheless, they were highly thought of by many Jews.

“as for zeal, persecuting the church” (verse 6)

The first mention of Paul in the Bible is as an assistant at the stoning of Stephen—the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:58; 8:1). This experience inflamed his hatred of Christians and caused him to go on a personal crusade to extend the persecution of Christians (Acts 8:1-3). Paul and other strict Jews thought he was serving God by persecuting Jesus followers.

“as for righteousness based on the law, faultless” (verse 6)

Paul had been scrupulous in obeying the laws and the teachings of the rabbis. This meant following sabbath laws, washing his hands correctly, avoiding certain foods, tithing, and so on.

It's because Paul's religious résumé was so impressive in its own way that it's so devastating when he follows up by saying, “Whatever were gains to me [all those credentials] I now consider loss [‘garbage’ or ‘dung’] for the sake of Christ” (3:7)!

Do you come from a religious background? If so, were you ever tempted to trust in your “résumé” instead of in Christ’s grace?

What danger do you see in putting too much reliance on religious “credentials” or “being good”?



WEEK FOUR

day three

READ

- Philippians 3:12-14

ADDITIONAL READING

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – Discipline to win the prize
- 2 Timothy 2:1-10 – Competing for the crown

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about being in the presence of God forever from Psalm 73:23-28 and Job 19:25-27.



I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11

WEEK FOUR

day four

READ

- Philippians 3:15-4:1

ADDITIONAL READING

- Ephesians 2:1-10 – Seated in the heavenly realms
- 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 – The pleasing aroma of Christ

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

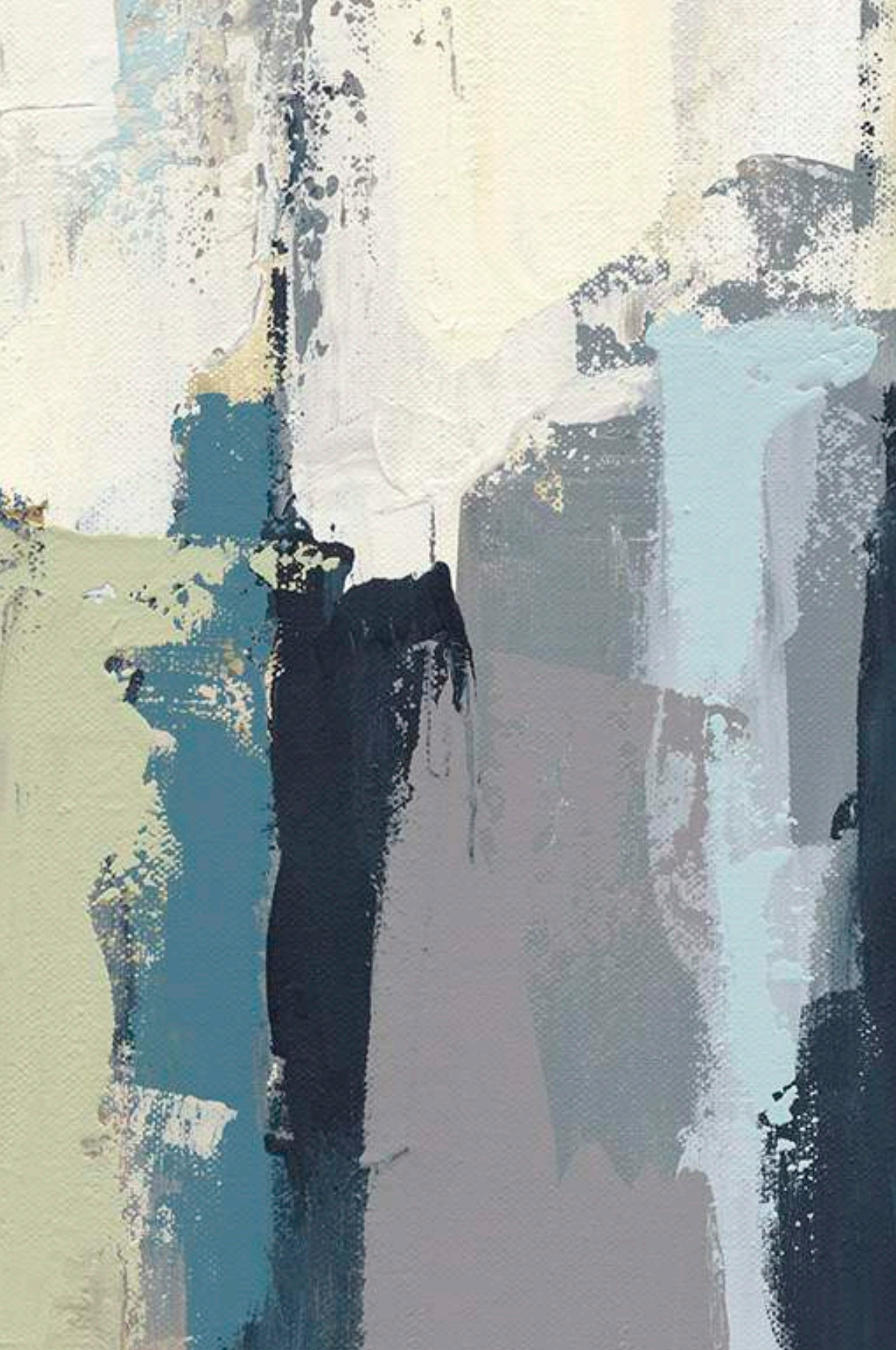
What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about waiting on the Lord from Psalm 130 and Ecclesiastes 7:8.



RECITE

Write out this week's memory passage
(Philippians 3:10-11) from memory.

A large white rectangular area intended for the user to write out the memory passage from memory. The area is completely blank and occupies the lower two-thirds of the page.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Week Four

Video teachings can be found at PhilippiansStudy.com

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

(Take a few minutes to answer these questions before discussing them with your group. You may want to refer to your own thoughts on this passage from pages 82-83.)

What is something that you thought mattered that you need to let go of, or as Paul said, forget?

What is one practical thing that you can do in order to know Christ more?



WEEK FIVE

Philippians 4

WEEKLY MEMORY PASSAGE

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7

WEEK FIVE

day one

READ

- Philippians 4:2-3

ADDITIONAL READING

- 2 Corinthians 13:11 – Living in peace with one another
- Ephesians 4:1-6 – The unity of the Spirit

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about godly community from Psalm 133 and Proverbs 20:3.

CHURCH FEUD

Church feuds are nothing new. The churches founded by the apostles offer examples of divisions among ethnic groups, divisions between rich and poor, differences of personality around leaders, the acceptance of immorality, false teaching, legalism, complacency, and much more. Also, as we see in Philippians 4:2-3, sometimes the early Christians just didn't get along.

We don't know anything more about Euodia and Syntyche, nor what they were disagreeing over, than what we see in these verses. Paul went out of his way to describe the two women as both part of a gospel-loving, heaven-bound group of believers. Nevertheless, they were having a disagreement that was a real problem in their church.

Probably Epaphroditus—the member of the Philippian church who had come to help Paul in Rome—had told Paul about the feud between the two. Epaphroditus may also have been the “true companion” (verse 3) that Paul asked to mediate the dispute.

Did the two women ever make up? We don't know. But we can use their example as a reminder of how important it is for us to seek forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity with our fellow believers.

What are some examples of fighting or disagreement you've seen among Christians?

What effects did these situations seem to have on church unity or witness?





Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and
petition, with thanksgiving, present
your requests to God. And the
peace of God, which transcends all
understanding, will guard your hearts
and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

WEEK FIVE

day two

READ

- Philippians 4:4-9

ADDITIONAL READING

- Psalm 145:17-20 – The Lord is near
- Ephesians 6:18 – Praying in the Spirit

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about asking for God's help from Psalm 5 and Proverbs 15:8.

WEEK FIVE

day three

READ

- Philippians 4:10-13

ADDITIONAL READING

- Matthew 6:25-34 – Anxious for nothing
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10 – Godliness with contentment

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about contentment from Psalm 23 and Proverbs 30:7-9.

WEEK FIVE

day four

READ

- Philippians 4:14-23

ADDITIONAL READING

- Acts 17:1-9 – Paul in Thessalonica
- 2 Corinthians 8-9 – An earlier crowd-funding effort

REVIEW

What key words, phrases, or main ideas stand out to you from today's Philippians passage?

RELATE

What are some ways you identify with this passage, either in your own life or your relationships with others?

RESPOND

What action can you take today to live out this scripture?

PRAYER

Write out a prayer to God. Use this space to thank Him and reflect on what He spoke to you.

DEVOTIONAL READING

- Read more about generosity from Psalm 112 and Proverbs 11:25.



I can do all this through him
who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:13

WHAT CAME NEXT?

Philippians gives us a glimpse into the lives of some early followers of Jesus in about AD 62. What happened to these people afterward?

Paul

It's believed that Paul was released from house arrest in Rome not long after writing the letter to the Philippians. There is some evidence that he traveled to Spain and other areas before being re-arrested in Rome. By that time, it had become illegal to be a Christian, and the emperor Nero was horribly persecuting Christians. Paul's final writings were 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. He was executed in Rome about AD 67 or 68. According to a statement by the Vatican in 2009, the remains of the apostle Paul have been identified inside a tomb in Rome.

Timothy

After Paul was released from his house arrest in Rome, he sent Timothy to lead the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). It was while they were separated that Paul wrote the letters known as 1 and 2 Timothy to his young friend and co-worker. When Paul knew his time was short, he begged Timothy to hurry to his side (2 Timothy 4:9). Timothy himself spent time in jail around this time (Hebrews 13:23).

Epaphroditus

The letter bearer is not referred to again in Scripture after the letter of the Philippians. But one early Christian writer listed somebody named Epaphroditus as an early bishop in Andriace, in what is today southern Turkey. Same guy?

The Philippian Church

For centuries, Philippi had an active Christian community, and they treasured the fact that the apostle Paul had visited there and written a letter to this church. The most impressive church building built in Philippi was called the Basilica of St. Paul. The town was damaged periodically over the years by earthquakes and wars before finally being abandoned by the 1500s.

What can you be doing now to build up a faith legacy that will live on after you're gone?

What are some lessons you've learned about contentment that you want to pass on to your family and friends?





RECITE

Write out this week's memory passage
(Philippians 4:6-7) from memory.

A large white rectangular area for writing the memory passage, centered on a dark red background. The area is empty, providing space for the user to write out the text from memory.

VIDEO TEACHING NOTES

Week Five

Video teachings can be found at PhilippiansStudy.com

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

(Take a few minutes to answer these questions before discussing them with your group. You may want to refer to your own thoughts on this passage from pages 104-105.)

Identify and share one “bucket” that you typically go to in times of emotional distress.

What are some of your own personal spiritual exercises that help you redirect your focus and bring you back to peace?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

I did this Bible study from ___/___/___ to ___/___/___

Things that were going on in my life at the time included:

My favorite part of the Philippians letter is the part about:

Something God revealed to me during this Bible study that I never want to forget is:

Prayer requests from my group that I want to keep bringing to the Lord include:



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Holly Furtick and her husband, Steven, are the founders of Elevation Church, where Steven is the lead pastor. Elevation launched in 2006 with the vision to see people far from God raised to life in Christ—and they have seen the church grow to reach thousands of people in many different locations. Holly loves having a front-row seat, whether she’s shouting down her husband while he preaches or is getting to see people grow in their faith.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in education from North Greenville University. Pastor Steven and Holly live in Charlotte, North Carolina, with their two sons, Elijah and Graham, and daughter, Abbey. They have yet to cave in to their children’s plea for a dog.

When she’s not writing, taking care of her family, or helping lead Elevation Church, Holly spends her time “reading” audio books and attempting to play tennis and grow her own vegetables. Follow her on Instagram @hollyfurtick and Facebook @hollyfurtick.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Stanford is a book editor, nonfiction writing collaborator, and novelist. Along with his wife, Elisa, he runs a boutique book editing studio called Edit Resource (editresource.com). As an editor or collaborator, Eric has worked on bestsellers by authors such as Steven Furtick, Michael Todd, David Platt, Caleb Kaltenbach, Mark Batterson, and Joshua Becker. He holds a bachelor's degree in English from Judson University and a master's degree in theology from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Eric lives in the woods of Colorado with his wife and two teenage daughters. He regrets that he did cave in to his family's plea for a dog.



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ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Artist Deann Hebert and her church paintings were the inspiration for the design of *Philippians: The Art of Contentment*. You'll see her artwork throughout the study, including her painting, "My Redeemer Lives," on the front cover.

Most known for her church and angel paintings, she traded in her corporate high heels for paintbrushes years ago, and for the past decade has been in an open working studio just south of Nashville. She does life with her family on a mini-farm in Brentwood, Tennessee, where they have lots of animals including two horses, Beau and Jac, who keep the entertainment coming.

Through her artwork, she seeks to tell the stories of our collective past, showcase the rich history of the South, inspire the viewer to listen to our ancestors' voices, and help people not just see but cherish old places and the lives they have influenced. Prints of the pieces featured in this study, as well as originals, are available for sale at www.deanndesigns.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

André Gide said, “No human masterpiece has ever been created without great labor.” If we were comparing this study to a work of art, then there is an entire team of people who labored to bring it to life.

Thank you to everyone who helped with *Philippians: The Art of Contentment*. Your commitment to reaching people with the gospel through your God-given gifts and abilities is inspiring. You may never see the impact you made, but know that because of you, people are learning how to rely on God’s Word, no matter their circumstances.

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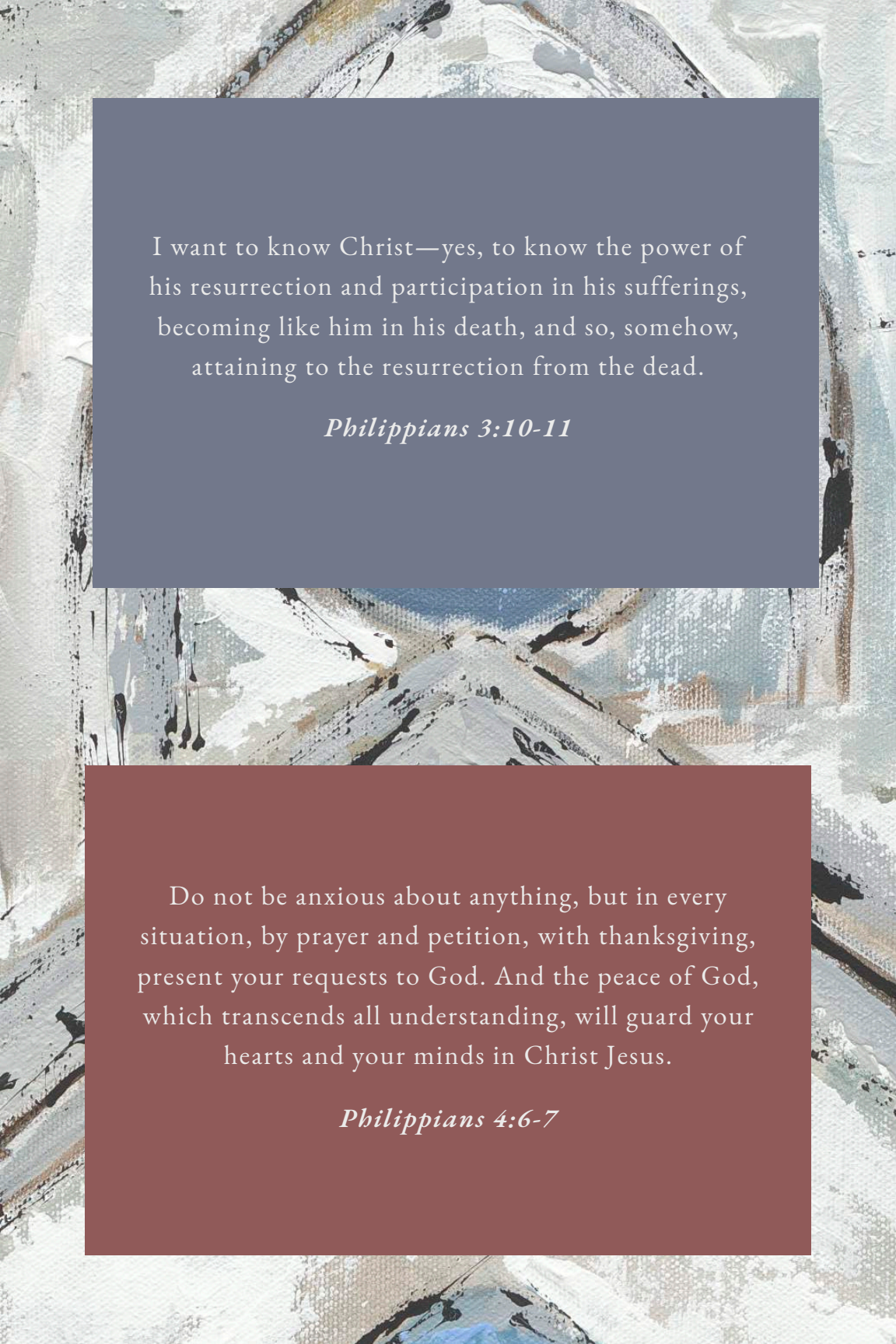


And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4



I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7





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