

Philippians: Discipleship Lessons

Participant Handouts for Classes and Groups

If you're working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the following handouts in this appendix at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" sheets, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

<http://www.jesuswalk.com/philippians/philippians-lesson-handouts.pdf>

Discussion Questions

You'll find 4 to 5 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you're running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

Key Verses

You might consider challenging your class or group to memorizing some or all of the key verses at the end of each lesson. These are in the NIV translation, but feel free to learn them in the dominant translation in your church.

1. Approve What Is Excellent (1:1-11)
2. For Me to Live is Christ (1:12-30)
3. He Emptied Himself (2:1-11)
4. God Is at Work in You (2:12-18)
5. Christian Character: Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)
6. That I May Know Him (3:1-11)
7. Pressing Toward the Goal (3:12-4:1)
8. Rejoice in the Lord Always (4:1-9)
9. A Partnership in Giving and Receiving (4:10-23)

1. Approve What Is Excellent (Philippians 1:1-11)

Q1. (1:1) What is the basic idea of “slave”? What is the root idea of “saint”? In what way are these words saying the same thing about a Christian’s relationship to God? (Note: to answer this question correctly you’ll need to refer to the notes on the precise word meanings.)

Q2. (1:6) When we become financial “partners” with a Christian missionary, minister, ministry, or church, what do we receive out of the partnership? What other kinds of support might we offer beyond financial?

Q3. (1:6) What does Paul expect God to do for the Philippian believers? Why does he expect God to do this? What is the basis of Paul’s confidence? On what basis can we expect God to do this for us?

Q4. (1:9-11) Why does Paul ask God to give the Philippian Christians discernment? What will be the result of discernment in their lives? How does selfishness cloud discernment? How is the good the enemy of the best in our lives?

Key Verses

“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

“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 until the day of Christ.” (Philippians 1:9-10)

2. Struggles that Advance the Gospel (Philippians 1:12-30)

Q1. (1:12-14) From the standpoint of witness to others, you are much more credible when you are undergoing personal struggles, stress, and problems. Why is this so? Why was Paul's witness so powerful? What personal struggle are you going through that could enhance your testimony if you handled it right?

Q2. (1:18b-19) Why is our ability to rejoice so dependent upon our faith that God is in control, working even in the midst of difficulty? What must you believe in order to be able to rejoice in the midst of problems? What is your basis for believing that?

Q3. (1:20-21) How can fear keep us from being a bold witness? Why does fear of people bind our tongues? How does "losing our life" for Christ's sake actually give us an abundant life? What fear is keeping you from clear witness?

Q4. (1:23) What do Philippians 1:23 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 teach about the state of Christians immediately after death? How does this comfort you? How does this energize you?

Key Verse

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

3. He Emptied Himself (Philippians 2:1-11)

Q1. (2:1-4). To achieve unity in your congregation, why is humility necessary? Can you give an example of how lack of humility caused a division in your church? What are you doing to bring unity in your church?

Q2. (2:6) In your own words, what does it mean that Christ didn't cling to his equality with God? How specifically does this passage teach that Jesus is divine?

Q3. (2:7-8) Was Jesus really a human being or only pretending to be one? What do these verses teach? What difference does it really make whether or not Jesus was human?

Q4. (2:9-11) We know we're supposed to humble ourselves like Jesus did. But how can we know whether or not God will exalt us? Why do we get impatient with this? What does our impatience sometimes lead to?

Key Verses

It's hard to pick just a single verse or two from this passage, so ...

⁶Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
⁷but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:6-11)

4. God Is at Work in You (Philippians 2:12-18)

Q1. (2:12-13). In this passage, what does it mean to “work out your own salvation”? Is this referring to salvation from sin? If not, what kind of salvation is it referring to?

Q2. (2:14-15) How does ceasing complaining and arguing enable a church to shine as stars in a dark sky? What does this shining as stars signify? Have complaining and arguing compromised your church’s witness as a God-place? If so, what can you do to change this?

Q3. (2:16) In what sense are we Christians to “hold fast” the Word of Life? In what sense are we to “hold forth” this Word of Life? How does this relate to the purpose of the church?

Q4. (2:17) You have gone through struggles and obstacles to your faith. If you were to look at your sufferings as a “drink offering” poured out before God, how does that honor God? How does that bring value to your struggles?

Key Verses

“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:12b-13)

“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.” (Philippians 2:14-16a)

5. Christian Character: Timothy and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:19-30)

Q1. (2:19-21) Why was Timothy's selfless concern so rare among church leaders? Rather than pointing the finger at others in your church, consider yourself. What things has Jesus had to deal with in your life that has helped you to become genuinely selfless and focused on the concerns of others? How has he refined you? (Of course, he is still at work in us!)

Q2. (2:22) Who has come alongside you to teach you? What potential leader in your church needs someone to come alongside them? Do you have a person or two that you are mentoring "as a son with a father" or "a daughter with a mother"?

Q3. (2:22) What is the significance of serving Jesus as a "slave" as opposed to serving him as a preference? What does it say about the quality of our service? Of our commitment? What is wrong with leaders who serve out of preference?

Q4. From what you've read in Philippians so far, what seems to be the Philippian church's chief problem? How does Paul's description of Timothy's character speak to this problem? How does Paul's call to honor men like Epaphroditus speak to this problem?

Key Verse

"I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 2:20-21)

6. That I May Know Him (Philippians 3:1-11)

Q1. (3:2-6) How does “confidence in the flesh” show up in your congregation? Have you ever struggled with it?

Q2. (3:2-6) Why isn’t Paul merely neutral about his religious pedigree? Why does he consider it loss, dung, an obstacle? In what way could your religious background be an impediment to your faith?

Q3. (3:9) How does righteousness obtained through faith differ from righteousness obtained through law observance? How seriously does righteousness by law observance infect your congregation? Society’s view of Christianity in general? Why is this concept of justification or righteousness by faith so difficult to grasp?

Q4. (3:8-10) What does it mean to “know” Christ? Does this mean to have faith? Or to have a personal relationship? Is it possible to have a personal relationship with Christ without faith? Is it possible to have faith without a personal relationship? Where are you on your quest to know Christ?

Key Verses

“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.” (Philippians 3:8-10)

7. Pressing Toward the Goal (Philippians 3:12-4:1)

Q1. (3:13) How can the past get in the way of our quest to know Christ? What do you need to “forget” so that you may focus on Christ today and tomorrow? Is there forgiving you need to do so you can grow in Christ?

Q2. (3:14) What is it like to be called upwards by God? Have you ever experienced this? What causes God’s call to become dim in our hearing? How can we renew our hearing of his call? What is the content or specifics of this message or summons or call?

Q3. (3:17) How can Paul be so bold as to ask others to imitate him? Why are we so hesitant to do this? How does God use imitation in building disciples? Who is likely to imitate you?

Q4. (3:18-21) Why is recognizing and affirming your citizenship and allegiance vital to discipleship? How does it keep us from the temptations outlined in verses 18 and 19? What are the dangers of a church combining and confusing the concepts of temporal patriotism with a Christian’s true citizenship?

Key Verses

“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

8. Rejoice in the Lord Always (Philippians 4:1-9)

Q1. (4:4-5) Is rejoicing in the Lord a feeling or an action? How should you seek to fulfill this command if you don't feel like it? What is the effect of rejoicing?

Q2. (4:6) How is a request in prayer altered by the presence of thanksgiving in the prayer? How does thanksgiving affect our faith as we pray?

Q3. (4:7) How does making our requests known to God help build a relationship and trust? What is God's part in the promise of peace?

Q4. (4:8) Why is mind control necessary for success? For mental and spiritual peace? What have you decided to focus on instead of your anxieties? How is this working for you?

Key Verses

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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 4:4-7)

9. A Partnership in Giving and Receiving (4:10-23)

Q1. (4:11-12) How can a “prosperity doctrine” threaten Christian ministry? To what prime motivation in us does such a teaching often appeal? In balance, what *does* the Bible teach about poverty and riches?

Q2. (4:11-13) What is the basis of Paul’s contentment? Does this contentment undermine ambition? What is necessary for us to achieve this kind of contentment?

Q3. (4:14-16) How were the Philippians’ financial gifts credited to their heavenly account, do you think? How was their giving linked to temporal blessings?

Q4. (4:19-20) In this context, what is the condition that must be met for the promise to be valid? What is the limit of the fulfillment of the promise? In your own words, what does the promise mean to you?

Key Verses

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:12-13)

“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)