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**A SUMMER DEVOTED TO  
KNOWING JESUS IN THE  
BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS**

## **ARE YOU WILLING?**

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul says, “My goal is to know him (3:10).” This is the greatest missionary the Christian movement has ever known letting us in on the goal of his life. It’s pretty simple, but it’s radical at the same time. It doesn’t feel earth-shattering, but for him it was life-transforming. The primary goal and aim of his life was to know Jesus.

Hopefully you know that there’s a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. It is completely possible to go to church, hang out around church people, and know the right answers to questions in Sunday school without actually having a real relationship with Jesus. This is the difference between knowing about him and actually knowing him.

This summer, we’re going to read, study, talk about, and meditate on what most people say is Paul’s most personal letter. It doesn’t just let us in on his theology (his beliefs about God); it lets us in on his heart. It doesn’t just show us what he did; it shows us why he did it. And it’s written to a church (a family of Jesus-followers) that he planted and loved very much.

If you’re willing to take part in this seventy day experiment and devote yourself to knowing Jesus over the next ten weeks, it’s completely possible that your life might change forever. The question is, “Are you willing?”

## **WEEK ONE, DAY ONE**

How tall were you when you were born? How much did you weigh? (Ask your parents if you need some help)

How tall are you now?

What happened in between then and now? You grew. You matured. Physical growth and physical maturity are what happen when life is present and your body is working properly. Though this seems obvious enough, we tend to forget it when it comes to our spiritual life. We can easily become complacent about our spiritual growth and maturity. We could look at a number of passages in the New Testament that call us to grow up in our faith, but let's just look at one from the book of Hebrews:

We have a great deal to say about this, and it is difficult to explain, since you have become too lazy to understand. Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God's revelation again. You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature - for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works. (Hebrews 5:14-6:1)

God wants us to grow from infancy to maturity in Christ, both as individuals and as a family of Jesus-followers. This is really what the letter to the Philippians is all about. So before we get into the letter itself, let's set the stage for Paul's letter to the church in the city of Philippi (pronounced PHIL-ih-pie) by looking at the "birth" of this church.

In Acts 13-28, we read about the missionary journeys of one of the greatest Christian missionaries (someone who takes the good news of Jesus to others) who ever lived: the apostle Paul. The word "apostle" just means "sent one." So Paul was sent by God to tell Gentiles (non-Jews) the good news of Jesus, and his obedience to God led him to the big city of Philippi.

Read Acts 16:11-40 to see the unlikely circumstances that led to the birth of the church in that city.

Who was the first person to follow Jesus in Philippi (verse 14)?

Who was the next person to follow Jesus after Phoebe's household (verse 16)?

Who was the next person to follow Jesus after these first few (verses 29-30)?

What do you think this church was like based on this story? What does it teach you about the power of the gospel?

What else stands out to you?

**PRAY:** Ask God to give you a deeper love for Jesus this summer and to strengthen you to be devoted to knowing him more. Allow what you've seen in God's Word to drive your prayers for yourself, your family, our student ministry, and others.

**IF YOU WANT TO GO DEEPER:** We can actually gather a little bit more information about the church in Philippi from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Philippi was a city in the Roman province of Macedonia. Though it's not an exact parallel, a province was similar to a modern day "state." Just like people from outside our state could refer to us as "the church in Arkansas," Paul could refer to this church as "the church in Macedonia." So read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, substituting "Philippi" for "the churches of Macedonia."

What else do you learn about the church in Philippi from these verses?

## WEEK ONE, DAY TWO

Start today by talking to God about what's on your heart and mind and asking him to speak to you. Before you dive in, you may want to review the origin story of the church in Philippi from Day One.

Imagine getting together with that church, maybe gathered in the home of one of the people we read about yesterday. You heard recently that your friend Paul, who planted your church, was put in prison because he wouldn't quit talking about Jesus, so you and the rest of the church sent him some money to help with his needs. Then one Sunday you get together with the rest of the believers in your city, only to find out that you got a letter from Paul to say thank you for the money the church sent and to teach you what maturity in Christ looks like in the midst of the difficulties you're facing. And here are the first words you hear:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:1-2, CSB)

When you were growing up, you probably learned how to write a letter. You were probably taught to start with a greeting ("Dear Bob...") and end with a closing ("Sincerely..."). In the ancient world, all of that was packed into the beginning of the letter. Letters often started with the name of the author, followed by who they were writing to, along with a brief greeting. Here, Paul identifies himself as the author along with his disciple Timothy. Paul probably dictated his words to Timothy while he was in prison, and Timothy wrote them down on a scroll to be taken to Philippi.

We tend to skip right over the greetings of Paul's letters, but they are rich with truth. Take some time to think through these questions and write out your answers as you examine these two verses:

Paul identifies both he and Timothy as **servants** of Christ Jesus. Another word for servant is slave. What does it mean to be a slave of Christ Jesus? Why would Paul call himself that?

Paul identifies the people in the Philippian church - every single one of them - as saints in Christ Jesus. The word saints means "holy ones." What does it mean to be holy? How do these verses say we are made holy?

Paul says that God extends grace and peace to all his children. Google the words "grace" and "peace" and write out what you think each of those words mean below.

Now let's think about how we can apply the truths in these verses:

Do you have a "Paul-Timothy" relationship? Do you have someone who is teaching you how to follow Jesus? Are you teaching someone else how to follow Jesus? If so, who is it? If not, who comes to your mind that you could reach out to? Send them a text today!

How can you live out your identity as both a saint and a servant of Christ Jesus today?

Are you working to achieve or get something from God? How can you rely on his grace instead?

Is your life characterized by the peace of God? How can you experience his peace today instead?

**PRAY:** Allow your reading today to drive your prayers. Praise God for who he is, repent of sin, ask him for whatever you need, and yield yourself to follow him.

## **WEEK ONE, DAY THREE**

What's on your mind today? How are you feeling? Anxious? Angry? Ashamed? Whatever it is, bring it to the Father in a time of honest confession. Then ask him to speak to you and change you through his Word and his Spirit. Don't rush past this moment.

After his greeting to the church in Philippi, Paul starts his letter by expressing his thankfulness for them and telling them how he has been praying for them. Read through these verses slowly several times, circling words you think might be important, taking note of repetition, and making notes about what stands out to you.

I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6, CSB)

We can learn so much from listening to other people pray, and that is certainly the case with the Apostle Paul. Take some time to think through these questions and write out your answers as you examine these verses:

What are some characteristics of Paul's prayer for the Philippians that you notice right off the bat? (By the way, remember that Paul is writing these words from prison!)

The themes of Paul's letters are often found in his opening prayer. Based on these verses, what would you guess are some key themes of his letter to the Philippians?

Why does Paul say he prays with joy for all the Philippians in every prayer? What does it mean to be "partners in the gospel?" (Hint: gospel refers to the good news about Jesus)

What is the "good work" that God started in them? Why would the promise that God is going to complete his work in them be such an encouragement in the midst of their present struggle?

Now let's think about how we can apply what we've seen:

Who are you "partners in the gospel" with? Are you experiencing the same joy in that partnership as Paul did with the Philippians? Why or why not?

Paul's prayer is full of thankfulness for people, for what God has done in the past, and what he knows God is going to do in the future. Take some time to write out your own prayer of thankfulness to God for those exact same things in your own life.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY:** This week we're going to memorize Philippians 1:6 together. Fill in the blanks with the words that are missing.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ of this, that he who started a \_\_\_\_\_ in you will carry it on to \_\_\_\_\_ until the day of Christ \_\_\_\_\_.

## **WEEK ONE, DAY FOUR**

Start today by thinking through the previous day and thanking God for any moments of grace he showed you, whether big or small, even if your day was hard. This is helpful for cultivating a heart of thankfulness. Ask him to continue to speak to you through his Word and to make you more like Jesus.

Today we continue through Paul's opening prayer for the Philippians. In this section, Paul is going to elaborate on why he has so many reasons for thankfulness and confidence. Read through these verses slowly several times, circling words you think might be important, taking note of repetition, and making notes about what stands out to you.

Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:7-8, CSB)

These verses show us something about how we are to think about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Think about these questions as you examine these verses:

How does Paul feel about his brothers and sisters in Philippi?

Just like he did in verse 5, Paul uses the word "partners" to describe the Philippians. This time, he calls them "partners with me in grace" to describe how they are all sharing in defending and confirming the gospel and in suffering for the gospel. Why would Paul call those things grace?

Paul then calls on God as a witness to show that he's telling the truth when he says that he misses them with the affection of Christ Jesus. This is an amazing verse. The word "affection" is actually translated in other places in the New Testament as "intestines" (which is a fun fact to bring up at parties). But here it's referring to loving someone from the deepest parts of yourself. Paul is essentially saying, "The love that Jesus has for you is the same love I have for you." He is living out Jesus's command in John 13:34, "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another."

Let's think about how we can apply this in our context:

What are some obstacles in our family of Jesus-followers (whether CSM or Young Adults) that could hinder us from this type of love?

What would it look like for you to love your family of Jesus-followers (whether CSM or Young Adults) with the affection of Jesus Christ?

What is one tangible act of love that you can show to someone in your family of Jesus-followers today?

**PRAY:** Allow your reading today to drive your prayers. Praise God for who he is, repent of sin, ask him for whatever you need, and yield yourself to follow him.

## **WEEK ONE, DAY FIVE**

Start today by “casting all your cares on [God], because he cares about you (1 Peter 5:7).” Ask him to speak to you and change your heart through our last reading of the week.

After seeing Paul’s thankfulness and love for the Philippians over these past two days, today we see exactly what he is praying for them and what he’s going to write about for the rest of his letter. Read through these verses slowly several times, circling words you think might be important, taking note of repetition, and making notes about what stands out to you.

And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in 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, CSB)

It’s important to point out that even though Paul is 100% confident that God is going to complete the work he started and bring this church to maturity (v. 6), he still feels the need to pray for it. God’s promises and sovereignty (power, rule, and reign) do not negate our responsibility to pray and work for our growth and the growth of others. Think about these questions as you examine these verses:

Based on Paul’s prayer, what are the characteristics of maturity that he wants them to experience?

What is the “fruit of righteousness?” Where does Paul say it comes from?

Based on the last six words of verse 11, what is the end result of our maturity and our lives supposed to be?

Summarize in one sentence how Paul says you grow in Christ.

Now let's apply these verses together:

Remember how Paul said in verse 4 that he was always praying these things for the Philippians. Who in your life (outside of yourself) do you need to be consistently praying for, that they might grow in maturity?

If maturity begins with love, how can you make sure that your love for Jesus keeps on growing based on this passage? What practices can you put in place on a regular basis to ensure this?

Are there any specific areas where you are living for your own glory and praise? List them below. How can you begin to live for "the glory and praise of God" in these areas?

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY:** Remember that we're memorizing Philippians 1:6 together. Fill in the blanks with the words that are missing.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, that he who \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_ in you  
will \_\_\_\_\_ it on to \_\_\_\_\_ until the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ \_\_\_\_\_.

**PRAY:** Allow your reading today to drive your prayers. Praise God for who he is, repent of sin, ask him for whatever you need, and yield yourself to follow him.

## WEEK ONE, DAY SIX

Today is a catch up day. If you missed a day of spending time with the Lord this week, rest in the fact that his affection for you hasn't decreased one bit, and allow that to inspire you to want to know him more. If you spent time with him every single day, rest in the fact that his affection for you hasn't increased one bit, and allow that to inspire you to want to know him more.

**SCRIPTURE MEMORY:** Fill in the blanks of Philippians 1:6 as we get closer to having it memorized!

\_\_\_\_\_ am \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ it \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the  
\_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

## WEEK ONE, DAY SEVEN

Today is another grace day. If you have finished your reading for the week, take some time to reflect on all that God taught you and how you can encourage your brothers and sisters by discussing it with them. Also take some time to finish memorizing Philippians 1:6 and "treasure his Word in your heart so that you might not sin against God (Psalm 119:11)."

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