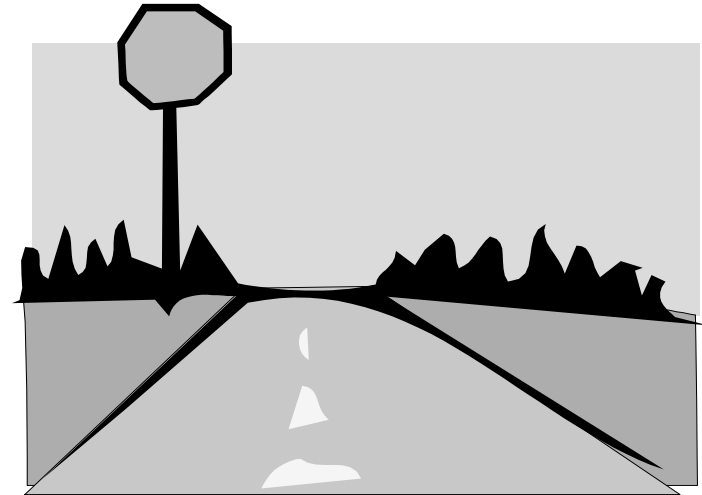


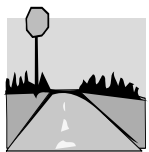
PHILIPPIANS

Your Journey To Joy

How You Can Be Happy In Spite of the American Dream



Digging Deeper Bible Study



Your Journey To Joy:
*How You Can Be
Happy In Spite of the
American Dream*
(Philippians)

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A Digging Deeper Bible Study

In a nutshell, how did the corporate body at Philippi (the church) act selflessly?

Money is an important element in our efforts to getting out the Gospel and supporting those who preach it. What attitudes about money can you identify in our focus passage, both from Paul's perspective and the church's point of view?

Based on their example, what are two ways your church or youth group could also act selflessly towards those who preach the gospel?

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4:17 indicates Paul is once again seeking to clear up his motives. Connect this to a previous verse in chapter 4, then ask yourself:

What common themes do you see?

Why do you think it is so important to Paul to clarify his truest intentions?

How does Paul describe their financial gift in 4:18?

Paul says in 4:17 that the financial gift the Philippians gave actually benefited *their* account. What is he saying about the spiritual benefits of giving?

4:19 seems to reiterate the principal that when we give to others, we are actually opening God's doors of blessing upon ourselves. From this perspective, what is one of the things God's blessings to us are based on?

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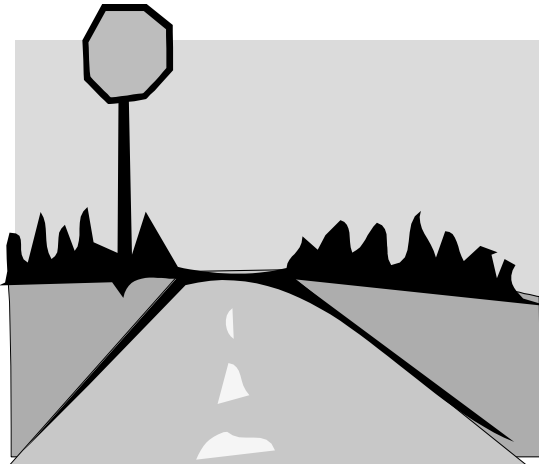
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Introduction

Philippians is all about joy. The word *rejoice* is found nine times, the word *joy* five times, and there are at least two other references to *rejoicing* in these four chapters. It is clear the idea of joy permeates this little book written by Paul from a prison in Rome.

In our culture, most would simply call this concept happiness. While we realize inner joy is deeper than circumstantial happiness, it is safe, at least for the sake of this study, to use both words interchangeably. Essentially, if you want to be happy, then Philippians is the book for you. In it Paul outlines the steps to true happiness, showcasing models of joyful people all along the way.

But hold on – the road to happiness doesn't start where you think. No, it begins at the place of selflessness, the only true motive from which anyone can pursue a genuine lifestyle of joy. It is from this centerpiece (2:1-4) that Paul expands his teaching, showing us how to be happy by giving, not getting. And he does that by painting portraits of selfless people – Jesus, Timothy, Epaphroditus, to name a few – who have lived out the principle of selflessness in street clothes. The result? A community of believers filled with joy!



What does Paul mean when he indicates in 4:10 that the Philippian Christians *lacked opportunity*?

What is Paul is trying to clear up about his motives in 4:11-12?

For decades, 4:13 has been used as biblical support for a variety of endeavors. Yet, to be true to the context, to what do you think “*all things*” actually refers?

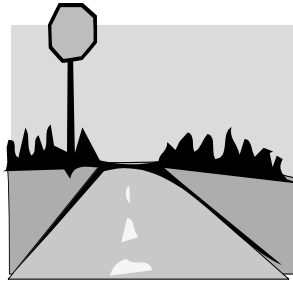
What word in 4:10 and 4:14 seem to have the same idea?

Apparently, the Philippian church was one of the first to help Paul financially. According to 4:15-16, when and where did this happen?

Giving God's Way

Focus passage: Philippians 4:10-20

Giving makes sense when we have money left over. However, that is rarely the model portrayed in Scripture. Giving God's way revolves around sacrifice and need, not comfort and sufficiency.



Study Questions:

According to 4:10, why did Paul rejoice?

What did the Philippian church do that they apparently couldn't do before (4:10)?

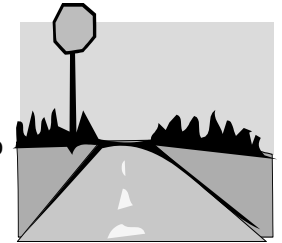
What do you think this refers to?

4:11 indicates Paul had a variety of circumstances, and 4:12 lists some of these. What were they? Perhaps scan back through Acts 21-27 looking for the different times Paul experienced these various circumstances.

It's On the Way, Not At the End

Focus Passage: Philippians 2:1-4

Happiness isn't found at the end of a long trek towards success, riches and fame. Instead, it's stumbled across on the way to serving others. In this centerpiece text, Paul sets the record straight about discovering joy.



Study Questions:

2:1 begins with four rhetorical statements, each beginning with the word "if." Why do you think Paul starts the chapter this way?

What common themes or words do you see in each of these four rhetorical statements?

2:2 gives us Paul's main request.

What is it?

How do we fulfill this request?

Write the four phrases mentioned in 2:2 that share the same idea.

According to 2:3 . . .

. . . what is the negative command? In other words, what are we *not* to do?

. . . and what is the positive command? What are we *to* do?

2:4 seems to give a practical way we can carry out verse 3. Is verse 4 encouraging us to *not* think about ourselves *at all* or simply think about ourselves to a lesser degree than we do others? Explain your answer.

Take a quick review of the themes in 2:1-4, then write out your thoughts about each in one sentence.

2:1 - Joy

2:2 - Unity

2:3 - Selflessness

How do you think *forgetting the past* and *reaching forward to the future* enables us to press on?

In 3:15 the phrase *this attitude* is mentioned again. To what attitude is Paul referring?

Read Acts 9:1-9. How do you think this passage relates to Paul's surpassing priority mentioned in Philippians 3?

Acts 9 gives us the *experience* of Paul's conversion, while Philippians 3 gives us the *result* of his conversion. Think back to your conversion experience, and reflect upon the following questions:

How has it resulted in a selfless lifestyle for you?

What have you given up so that you can know Christ?

How do you press on for God's upward call?

What spiritual motivation drives you? Is this motivation external and fleshly, or is it internal and spiritual?

There is a definite shift in the passage from Paul's emphasis on himself to his emphasis on Christ's work at Calvary. Why do you think this shift is important in getting to know God in an intimate fashion?

While Paul's overwhelming priority was to know God, 3:12 indicates he was still striving to attain it. What does this indicate about Paul's attitude towards learning and development?

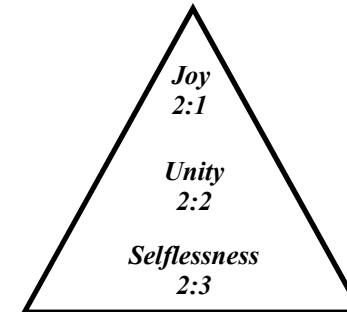
Paul says he *presses on to lay a hold of something for which Christ has already laid hold of him*. What is that common element of which he is speaking?

Paul indicates in 3:13-14 that he has not attained the status of knowing Christ in a perfect way. Yet, what one thing does he do to accomplish that?

How does Paul press on in 3:14? (Look in the previous verse for the answer.)

From your perspective, how do these three work in conjunction with one another?

Consider looking at these ideas as a *Happiness Pyramid*, with each concept building off the previous one (see below). In light of this diagram . . .



. . . how does *joy* ultimately stem from *selflessness*?

. . . in what ways does this contradict with our society's view of happiness?

. . . how is the search for joy and happiness, apart from selflessness, just a disguised form of selfishness?

Using the three-column chart below, complete the following exercises.

1. Read through John 15, listing any reference to *joy*.
2. Now scan through John 17, noting the references to *unity*.
3. Lastly, look over John 19 noticing any references or examples of *selflessness*.

Jesus and the Happiness Pyramid

<i>John 15</i>	<i>John 17</i>	<i>John 19</i>

In what ways do you see these themes in the life of Christ?

According to 3:8, what was the most important priority in Paul's life? Look up the word "*knowing*" in a Bible dictionary or commentary and write your thoughts on the meaning of this word from Paul's perspective.

Paul says three times in 3:7-8 that he counts his previous accomplishments as a loss. What does he mean by the word *loss*? Why do you think he repeats this so adamantly in such a short amount of time?

According to 3:9, how do we attain a righteous standing?

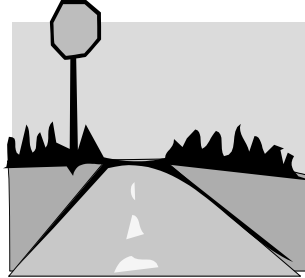
If 3:8 tells us Paul's core value, 3:10 seems to describe how he lived that out. What does Paul do to know Christ?

According to 3:10, on what part of Christ's life does Paul seem to concentrate?

What a Difference a Day Makes

Focus passage: Philippians 3:1-21

While Paul's life and ministry took many twists and turns, it all goes back to a day when, while traveling to Damascus, Jesus turned Paul inside-out. Philippians 3 chronicles the changes that resulted from that one simple day in the Son!



Study Questions:

Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to beware of what three things?

According to 3:3-4, why are we to watch out for these elements?

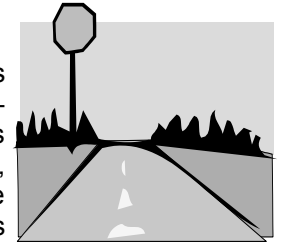
Paul describes his pre-conversion status in what ways? List the words or phrases that put him on the pedestal of human achievement.

According to 3:7, how did he now look upon those things?

The Main Thing and the Main Things

Focus passage: Philippians 1:9-11

While this is the third time Paul mentions the word *pray*, it is the first time he actually itemizes his prayer. In other words, it's the very first time in the book he explains, not only his actual prayer, but also how he prays for the Philippian Christians. It is this prayer that explains how we can actually live selflessly.



Study questions:

According to 1:9, what is the main thrust of Paul's prayer?

Based on 1:9, in what two ways is love to abound or grow? Using a Bible commentary or dictionary, look up these two elements of a growing love. What do they mean?

According to 1:10, what is the result of a growing love?

When Paul says in 1:10 that we will be able to *approve the things of excellence*, he is essentially saying we will understand what really matters. How is loving each in an increasing fashion connected to understanding what really matters?

According to 1:10, we will become *sincere* and *blameless* when we live life in this way.

Being *sincere* points to our relationship with God. List other words that would also be synonymous for having a *sincere* relationship with Christ.

Being *blameless* points to our relationship with other people. List other words that are similar to the concept of being blameless in front of others.

Using a concordance, look up other references that contain these words as well.

The titles in 2:25, along with the description of his work in 2:30, indicate that Epaphroditus practiced certain habits. List the habits you think were part of his lifestyle.

Read Romans 16:3-5. Who in this passage sounds similar to Epaphroditus?

What words or phrases in both passages seem to connect these people?

Make a list of at least two people you consider modern-day Epaphrodituses – Messengers who risk their life for the work of Christ. How can you honor them this week?

Epaphroditus seems to have been a messenger for both Paul and the Philippian church. What phrases in verses 25-30 indicate this role?

Why were the Philippian Christians to receive Epaphroditus?

How were they to receive Epaphroditus?

How and why were the Philippian Christians to honor Epaphroditus?

Epaphroditus did not risk his life in selfish endeavors, but, according to verse 30, to complete what?

What is meant by the phrase "*deficient in your service to me*" (2:30)?

How did Epaphroditus make up what the Philippian Christians were apparently lacking?

According to 1:11, a selfless person who understands what really matters and is growing in love is, when all is said and done, living to glorify whom?

In light of verse 9, what would you consider to be the "main thing?"

Compare this to the trait Jesus said would identify all of his disciples (i.e., love), as well to what He said in Matthew 22:37-40. Why do you think love was so important to Jesus, as well as many of the New Testament writers?

According to 1:10, we are to approve things that are excellent.

What are some ways you can decipher what elements matter most?

How is loving others related to this task?

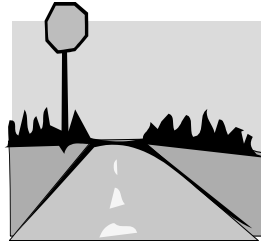
What are three ways you can live this out in your church?

It's Still Good News

(even if the paper boy is a jerk)

Focus passage: Philippians 1:12-26

When others don't do things the way we think they should, we often get upset, letting them steal our joy. Not Paul — he was determined to rejoice in the good news, even if those who delivered it weren't up to par.



Study Questions:

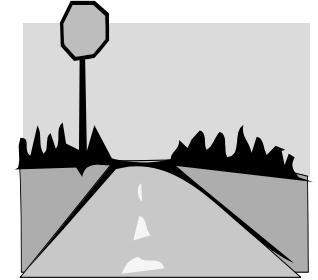
According to 1:12, the words “*my circumstances*” refer to much of Paul's ministry in Acts, specifically chapters 21-27. Scan through these chapters listing some of the events the writer is talking about.

Paul states in verse 12 that his circumstances have *turned out for the greater progress of the gospel*. What three things in 1:13-14 would be specific examples of this *greater progress*?

The Two Habits of Highly Selfless People

Focus passage: Philippians 2:25-30

Risk-takers are hard to find. Even harder to locate is one who will “take a bullet” for someone else! But that is exactly the way Paul describes his companion Epaphroditus — a partner willing to die for the cause of Christ!



Study Questions:

Paul describes Epaphroditus in two ways: *What he was to Paul* and *what he was to the Philippian church*. Read 2:25 and then list these descriptions. Using a commentary or Bible dictionary, define what these words mean.

Why do you think it distressed Epaphroditus that the Philippian church heard he was sick?

Why do you think Paul says God had mercy on *him* as well (2:27)?

How was Timothy seeking after the interests of Christ Jesus in serving Paul and the church at Philippi?

2:22 states that Timothy had *proven his worth*. Based on Paul's description of Timothy, what do you think this phrase means?

What words or phrases would indicate how this happened?

Paul says that Timothy served with him like a *child serving with his father*. What inferences could you possibly draw from this analogy about their relationship? Also read Acts 16:1-4 for further information.

Looking back over the focus passage, make a list of Timothy's traits. What characteristics marked his lifestyle? Think of two ways you could implement these traits in your life.

Looking over verses 12-14 . . .

. . . what is the negative angle to Paul's circumstances?

. . . what are the positive results of his circumstances?

Continuing with this trend, what seems to be the negative aspects in 1:15-17?

Yet, what seems to be the positive results in verse 1:18-19?

According to 1:15-17, there were different motives for preaching the gospel. List them, and then explain what Paul meant by *envy*, *strife* and *good will*.

Envy -

Strife -

Good will -

Those who were preaching Christ from envy and strife were doing so out of *selfish ambition*. According to 1:17, what were they hoping to gain from Paul's imprisonment?

However, what was Paul's concern – *how* they preached or *what* they preached?

Why do you think Paul concentrated on this perspective?

In doing so, what earlier principle from chapter one was Paul modeling?

According to 1:20, what was Paul's greatest hope?

After reading 1:21-25, it is clear Paul's main concern was with whom?

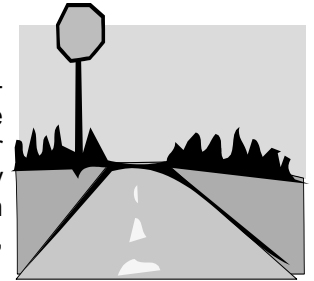
What verse seems to indicate that Paul was experiencing a personal conflict?

Explain this conflict in your own words.

Lifestyles of the Meek and Selfless

Focus passage: Philippians 2:19-24

Lifetime friends are rare. Why? Probably because there are so few people really willing to "go the extra mile" year after year. After all, that's what really cements a relationship, isn't it? Such was the case with Paul and Timothy, lifetime friends serving others and God.



Study Questions:

According to 2:19, what was Timothy's role?

Paul describes Timothy in 2:20-21.

How does he describe his inner trait?

How does he describe his outward characteristics?

What earlier verses in chapter 2 sound a lot like 2:21? List the common theme(s).

What earlier verse in chapter 1 sounds a lot like 2:22? List the common theme(s).

According to 2:10, the exaltation of Jesus is done to the glory of whom?

Connect this to 1:11, asking yourself, "What should be my primary purpose in life?"

How can you give glory to God through your actions each day instead of taking credit for yourself?

Read James 4:10. How does this verse connect to Philipians 2:9?

In order to be like Christ we have to **give up** ("emptied himself"), **take up** ("became obedient to the point of death"), and **lift up** ("God highly exalted Him"). Based on our focus passage, review ways Jesus did all three, then think of ways you can follow His example.

"I can **give up** my rights by . . .

"I can **take up** my cross by . . .

"I can **lift up** God's Son and God's name by . . .

Paul is an example of selflessness in that he continually thought about the Philipians' needs, not only his own. What phrases in 1:24-26 indicate this attitude?

Take another look at our focus passage, then consider this: 1:12-20 seems to indicate that Paul considered the **gospel** more important than himself, and 1:21-26 indicate that Paul considered their **growth** more important than himself. What do these two attitudes tell you about Paul's priorities?

Did Paul seem to operate according to the Happiness Pyramid? If so, list the verses that refer to the three elements of the Happiness Pyramid.

According to 1:12-26, in what ways did Paul exemplify his prayer in 1:9-11?

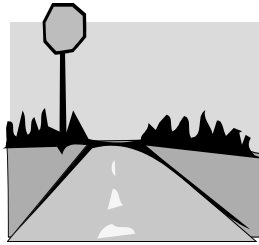
How did Paul concentrate on the things that really matter? Specifically, consider 1:18.

Paul was actually willing to forego seeing Jesus in order to stay and help the Philipian Christians. What would you be willing to give up for the benefit of another believer?

Not WWJD, But HWJD

Focus passage: Philippians 2:5-11

It's a popular question: "What would Jesus do?" Yet, Paul takes the time to tell us what Jesus *already* did, and encourages us to model the very same attitude. Perhaps it's not a question we should be asking, but a statement we should be making: "Here's **What Jesus Did!**"



Study Questions:

According to 2:5, what is the attitude we're to display?

If this attitude (2:5) looks backwards to 2:3-4, and forwards to 2:6-8, write out some practical descriptions of this attitude based on those two views.

Backwards (2:3-4)

Forwards (2:6-8)

According to verse 6, what was Christ willing to give up?

2:8 indicates it was not enough for Christ to simply become a man, but He actually had to become a man who was willing to be humiliated by what act?

Reflect on the phrase "*even death on a cross.*" Why does Paul emphasize this aspect of Christ's suffering?

In the New Testament, Christ encourages believers to "*take up their cross.*" Do you see any similarities between what Christ asks of us and what He did at Calvary?

According to 2:9, what was the result of Christ's obedience?

The verb in 2:9 is past tense, indicating Christ has already been exalted. How do you think this has happened?

Based on 2:10, in what ways is this *exalting* still in a future tense?