

Philippians

Lesson 2

Chapter 1:1-11

Leader Guide

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Lesson 2

Philippians 1:1-11

Praying with Joy

I thank my God every time I remember you. *Philippians 1:3*

Prayers

Introduction

How do you bless someone you love? Paul begins by *telling* the Philippians his joy and affection for them and gives thanks for the support he received from them throughout his ministry, even now that he is in prison. Lavish love, thanks, and praise pour out of every page of Paul's letter. Paul took an *active role* in nurturing their faith. Even though long absences punctuated their fellowship, Paul visited them to *enjoy their presence* whenever possible on his journeys. Paul also *cast a vision of a special future* for them. He was confident God would complete his work in them, bringing them to full maturity in love, knowledge, insight, and righteousness. He compared them to bright shining stars, holding out the word of life to a world lost in darkness.

Read Philippians 1:1-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Phil 1:2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil 1:3 I thank my God every time I remember you.

Phil 1:4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

Phil 1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,

Phil 1:6 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.

Phil 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

Phil 1:8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Phil 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Phil 1:10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

Phil 1:11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

1. What words set the tone of Paul's letter to the Philippians?

In nearly every line of his introduction, Paul heaps on his affection for this congregation:

I thank my God every time I remember you

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy

**I have you in my heart
How I long for all of you
This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more**

As we read Philippians, note that Paul uses the word "joy" nineteen times. But his focus remains on Christ, whose name appears forty times.

2. Paul and Timothy describe themselves as servants in verse 1, but he identified himself as an apostle in his letters to the Corinthians and Galatians. Why might he have chosen the less formal title with the Philippians?

The book of Philippians does not address any significant heresies or inappropriate behaviors found in the Galatian and Corinthian churches. Paul writes out of gratitude to his friends, not as one in authority over them.

3. From its beginning as a church with only the families of Lydia and the jailer, the Philippian church had grown into a body with a hierarchical structure with saints, overseers, and deacons by the time of Paul's arrest. Briefly describe the meaning of these roles.
 - a. Saints

Saints are everyone in the church body. Saint means "holy," someone set apart for God's purposes in Christ. Saints are people "in Christ."

- b. Overseers

Overseers were elders and pastors responsible for shepherding the church body with guidance, teaching, and "management" decisions.

- c. Deacons

Deacons were charged with the secular activities of the church, distributing food to the needy and meeting material needs in the church body.

4. Grace and peace to you in verse 2 were the two most common greetings in the Greek and Jewish world. Grace to you (charis) was the Greek equivalent to "Have a good day." Peace (Shalom) in Hebrew was wishing someone well in every aspect of their being. Paul used the same greetings from the perspective of someone who has received God's grace to be in Christ so they can be at peace with God. In this way, God's grace always comes before his peace. What are some of the many blessings you have in Christ that you could complete Paul's greeting with:

Have a good day because of _____.

**God's abundant grace!
God's love for us as his children!
God's forgiveness of all our sins!**

**Our salvation! Our hope for eternal life!
Unity and fellowship in Christ!
Loving relationships, family, God's provision, and many more!**

5. In verse 3, Paul thanks God every time he remembers the Philippians. What is the difference between thanking someone ("Thank you.") and thanking God for someone ("I thank God for you.")? Which do you prefer to hear?

"Thank you" is polite, good, and proper, but "I thank God for you" conveys the person's uniqueness and gives God glory for their uniqueness. What an easy and non-threatening way to witness and tell someone they are special!

6. In verses 4-5, Paul says he prays with joy for the Philippians because of their partnership with him in the Gospel from the first day until now. Refer to Philippians 4:10-20 and discuss how the Philippians cared for Paul's needs.

Phil 4:10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

Phil 4:11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

Phil 4:12 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.

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Phil 4:14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Phil 4:15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;^e

Phil 4:16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.

Phil 4:17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.^h

Phil 4:18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen

The Philippians cared for Paul's needs from their first conversion by providing financial support and hospitality to him and his co-workers. They also prayed for him and sent Epaphroditus to care for Paul when they learned Paul was in prison.

7. It is surprising to read about Paul talking about joy while in prison. What does his joy teach you about spiritual joy?

Paul's joy was not built on favorable circumstances or giddy emotions; it was founded on seeing God's promises come to fruition. The gospel was advancing even while he was in prison; he was writing his letters and encouraging others in their faith; he was in close union with his friends in Philippi, and he could see their faith maturing – and was confident that God would bring it to completion. Paul had joy in things of eternal value.

8. The word translated partnership in Philippians 1:5 is "koinonia" and implies an ideal of intimate communion. Our word communion is related to koinonia. Paul and the Philippians shared life experiences and developed strong bonds of affection. Their close relationship is shown in their concern for Paul, sharing in his troubles, and providing financial support. Paul responded with great affection to their concern, shown in verses 1:7-8, "since I have you in my heart" and "how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." How can you help build greater intimacy with your church relationships?

Building intimacy in a church body requires sharing life experiences. Intimacy and unity go beyond worship and require that lives be knit together through joint service, fellowship, knowing the needs of others and helping to meet those needs, as well as knowing each other's joys and celebrating with them.

9. Philippians 1:6 is a favorite verse in the Bible, "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." Looking back on how God began his good work in you brings assurance of how God will carry it on to completion. Discuss either - how God began his work in you, or He has brought you to this moment and is He still carrying you to completion?

I have never felt closer to Christ than now. Perhaps it is because I recognize his guidance in my life and am more grateful. Perhaps it is because his Spirit is shouting at me to avoid the snares of these times, or perhaps it is because my own mortality has been tested and is very much in focus. There is still much to do, and I need to go about my Father's business by exalting Christ in my life!

10. Paul provides an excellent example of a prayer for the spiritual growth of others. I've always thought Paul's prayer in verses 9-11 modeled a father's love for his children. What are some of the things Paul prays for the Philippians?

^{Phil 1:9} And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ^{Phil 1:10} so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ^{Phil 1:11} filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

- a. Verse 9 **Abounding love with knowledge and insight**
 - b. Verse 10 **A life of purity and discernment**
 - c. Verse 11 **A life filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ**
11. Why are love, insight, and discernment so important in the Christian walk?

Spiritual maturity begins with love because love for others springs from love for God. Every relationship we have requires love, insight, and discernment. It is easy to imagine how love for children without discernment could lead to over-indulgence, permissiveness, and a lack of discipline. Paul's prayer for knowledge, insight, and discernment for the Philippians was so they would make good moral decisions and not sin and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. The foundation of our purity is knowing that Christ our righteousness.

12. The fruit of righteousness is the same as the fruit of the Holy Spirit. What are the fruits of righteousness Paul prayed for in verse 11? "Bearing fruit" is a common theme in Paul's letters (Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:9, Colossians 1:10, and James 3:17-18).

The fruit of righteousness encompasses all aspects of our maturing spiritual character and the good works taken in Christ's name. To Paul, bearing fruit includes spiritual qualities of love, joy, peace-loving, patience, kindness, all manner of goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, and being considerate, submissive, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere.

13. Describe any ministry partnerships you have with the group and how it has been a blessing in your life.

We have always been intentional about supporting missionaries and mission organizations and look forward to their home leave visits. When possible, we attend yearly mission conferences to hear how the Holy Spirit is advancing God's kingdom and reaping the harvest of all nations.

Closing Prayer