



Title: Experiencing Philippians

Lesson 1

Welcome and opening prayer:

Group Leader: The following is for your information. You may choose to read all or a part of introduction to the book to the group.

The author of the book is the Apostle Paul, whom sent this letter to the church at Philippi. It is estimated to been written in approximately 61 or 62 A.D, while Paul was held captive in Rome. In spite of his [Paul's] captivity, he was writing about joy; which makes this letter quite remarkable. Paul's writing was intent on providing evidence that a Christian's (Believer's) immediate circumstances are not factors which should determine the individual's attitude(s) toward life. Paul accomplishes this by centering all aspects of his life on Jesus Christ as a humble servant, even though He is God (2:5-11).

Paul's joy at the mere thought of the Philippian church is undeniable in the letter, and it's that same joy that he wanted the recipients of his letter to possess as well. In order to lead the Philippians to this truth; Paul took them directly to Jesus, teaching them that a community of believers living in harmony with one another comes only through mutual humility modeled after the Savior. Paul wrote that he poured out his life as an offering for the sake of Christ. It was in His [Christ's through the Holy Spirit] leading Paul found great joy and contentment in Christ's service. His letter to the Philippians showed them that by centering their lives on Christ, they, too, might live in true joy. Even with all of life's pressures and challenges, if we keep focused on Christ, we have so much to be thankful for.

However, Paul wrote this letter in order to encourage the Church at Philippi through instructing them that true joy is only found in humble faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ; and to live in unity/harmony with fellow followers of Christ, while serving others as Christ did -In love, for the glory of God the Father.

Group leader Note:

This apostolic letter begins different than most of Paul's other letters. He doesn't begin by stating the authority/office bestowed upon him by the Lord, as in other epistles. Paul begins by setting the tone/intent for this letter: By focusing on servant-hood (humility) to the Lord and [all] others; and with thanksgiving (joy) in spite of his current situation (imprisonment in Rome). It is interesting to note, Paul addresses this letter to "all the saints", and then to the deacons and overseers. Placing **EVERY** follower of Christ in the same role - which is to further the Kingdom of God, regardless of their position, place, or circumstance.

Group Exercise:

Group Leader:

Have group members quietly read and reflect on Philippians 1:1-20.
(Suggest that they take notes)

Have a group member read:

Philippians 1:1-8 (NASB)

¹ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every

prayer for you all,⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.⁶ *For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Ask:

1. What does the writer want to share with us?
2. Why does Paul identify himself as a bond-servant of Christ?
3. Why is Paul thankful for these believers? And, what makes them dear to him [Paul]?
4. Is there anyone (any group of believers) that are that dear to you? What makes them so dear to you? Is there anyone that holds you that dear?

Have a group member read and group participants reflect on:

Philippians 1:9-11 (NASB)

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Reflect ask and discuss:

1. What is Paul praying for; and, how does that lead to a greater knowledge and insight?
2. Why does he [Paul] want this for the Philippians?
3. What does it mean to be discerning; and what does Paul want the readers to be discerning about?
4. What is the “Fruit of Righteousness;” and how is God glorified in this?

Have a group member read and group members reflect on:

Philippians 1:12-20 (NASB)

¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,¹³ so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else,¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.¹⁵ Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will;¹⁶ the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel;¹⁷ the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Reflect ask and discuss:

1. What can be gleaned from Paul and his relationship with the Lord?
2. How can we apply that to your (make it personal: MY) Life?
3. What can we learn about the Philippians and their relationship with Paul?
4. How can we apply those traits to the relationships in our (make it personal: MY) life?
5. Where does the certainty that the Philippian’s Faith is genuine and will continue?