

Philippians Study Guide: A 4-Week Bible Study for Individuals and Small Groups

Four weeks of reading, reflection and prayer

Use this guide at your own pace, or meet weekly with a small group. Read the whole chapter in your preferred Bible, then use the questions to notice, reflect and consider a response. You do not need to reach the same conclusions as everyone else. Listen generously and make room for honest questions.

Background: Philippians is a letter written by Paul to the church in Philippi while he was in prison. Across its four chapters, the letter considers joy in hardship, the humble example of Christ, perseverance in faith, and peace and contentment.

A note on the Scripture: the verse summaries in this guide are plain-English paraphrases, not quotations from a particular Bible translation. Read each passage in your preferred Bible for its full wording and context.

Week 1 | Joy in hardship

Read-through: Philippians 1. Notice how Paul describes his circumstances, his priorities and the community's life together.

Discuss and reflect

1. What stands out to you about Paul's response to being in prison? What might be shaping his perspective?
2. How does Paul describe the spread of the message about Christ through difficult circumstances?
3. What does Paul's affection for the Philippians show about the value of encouragement and prayer in a community?
4. What could it mean, in everyday life, to live in a way that reflects the good news you have received?
5. Where might you need hope or support in a hard season, and who could you invite to walk alongside you?

Memorise-this-reference suggestion: Philippians 1:6. Read the verse in your preferred Bible and practise its reference during the week.

Prayer: God, meet us in difficult circumstances. Help us notice signs of hope, encourage one another and live with courage and love. Amen.

Week 2 | Humility and the example of Christ

This week considers the shape of a humble life. Paul connects the community's unity with practical care, and points to Christ's self-giving example as a pattern for how we regard and serve one another.

Read-through: Philippians 2. Read the whole chapter, paying attention to the movement from shared life and humility to faithful witness.

Discuss and reflect

1. What attitudes and actions does Paul encourage in the community? Which feel most challenging to practise?
2. In the passage about Christ, what do you notice about humility, service and honour? What questions does it raise for you?
3. How might choosing to value another person change a conversation, decision or disagreement this week?
4. Paul names Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples of care and service. What qualities do you see in their stories?
5. Where could you offer practical support without seeking recognition or control over the outcome?

Memorise-this-reference suggestion: Philippians 2:3-4. Read the verses in your preferred Bible and practise their reference during the week.

Prayer: Jesus, teach us a humble love that notices others and serves with care. Give us unity without pride, and help our actions reflect your compassion. Amen.

Week 3 | Pressing on

Paul reflects on the things he once counted as gain and describes a continuing journey of knowing Christ. This chapter invites us to hold our achievements lightly, keep growing and look ahead with hope.

Read-through: Philippians 3. Notice what Paul sets aside, what he pursues and how he describes the community's shared hope.

Discuss and reflect

1. What does Paul describe as less important than knowing Christ? How does that challenge familiar measures of success?
2. What might it mean to know Christ more deeply through both joy and difficulty?
3. Paul describes himself as still moving towards a goal. What helps you keep learning and growing in faith?
4. Is there something from the past that you need to acknowledge, learn from or release as you move forward?
5. How can a shared sense of hope help a group support one another through setbacks or change?

Memorise-this-reference suggestion: Philippians 3:13-14. Read the verses in your preferred Bible and practise their reference during the week.

Prayer: God, help us keep growing in faith. Give us wisdom to learn from the past, courage for the next step and hope for the journey ahead. Amen.

Week 4 | Peace and contentment

The final chapter brings practical counsel about relationships, attention, prayer and gratitude. Paul's words about contentment come from lived experience and point towards a steadiness grounded in God, not in having every circumstance go our way.

Read-through: Philippians 4. Pay attention to the connections between community, prayer, thought and contentment.

Discuss and reflect

1. What practical steps does Paul suggest for relationships and shared life? Which might strengthen your community?
2. How does the passage connect prayer, gratitude and bringing our concerns to God? What do you notice about that invitation?
3. Which kinds of things does Paul encourage the Philippians to give their attention to? How might you put that into practice?
4. What does contentment mean to you? How might it differ from ignoring pain or pretending everything is easy?
5. Looking back over the four chapters, what idea or practice would you like to carry into the coming month?

Memorise-this-reference suggestion: Philippians 4:6-7. Read the verses in your preferred Bible and practise their reference during the week.

Prayer: God of peace, receive our concerns and teach us gratitude and contentment. Help us focus on what is good, care for one another and carry the lessons of this study into daily life. Amen.

Small-group leader tips

Invite someone to read the chapter aloud or allow quiet reading time. Begin with an open question and give everyone time to think before discussion. Welcome different experiences and interpretations, and avoid pressuring anyone to share personal details. If the conversation wanders, return gently to the passage. Close by naming one practical response and offering the prayer, leaving space for people to participate in a way that feels comfortable. Free from Jesus Light Studio, jesuslightstudio.com. Created by Domonic.