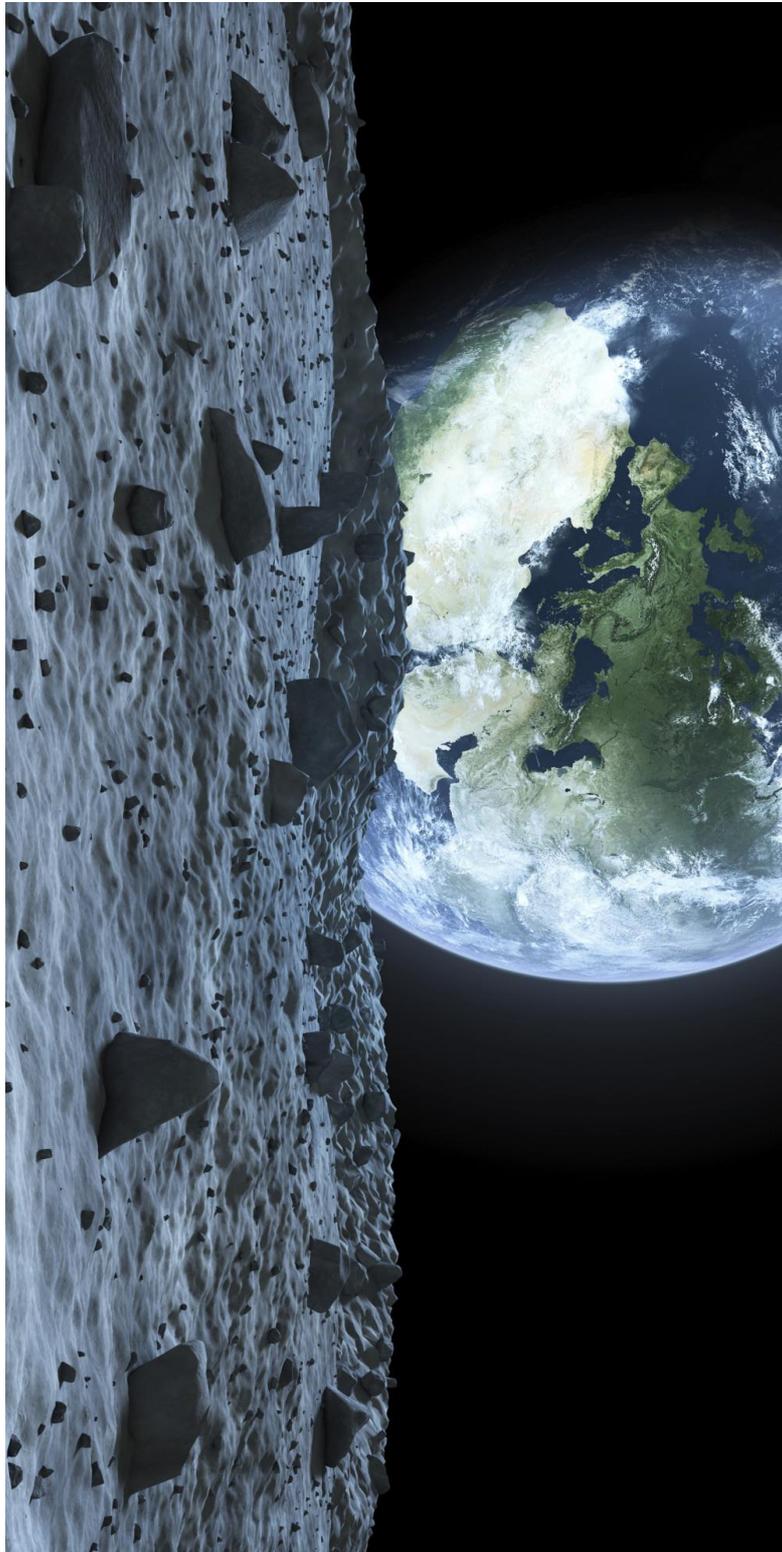


CITIZENS OF HEAVEN



LIVING ON THE EARTH

CONTENTS

Session 1	Introduction to Philippians - A people belonging to God	pages 1 - 4
Session 2	Living on earth as citizens of heaven	pages 5 - 7
Session 3	Unity in self forgetfulness	pages 8 - 11
Session 4	A call to Christ centred Maturity	pages 12 - 16
Session 5	Unity, Prayer, thinking and giving	pages 17 - 20

DEVOTIONAL STUDY PROGRAMME

Philippians

Ken and Sue Matthews

Session 1

The Background:

Setting the Scene - the physical and geographical setting



Read Acts chapter 16 to demonstrate the attention of God's Holy Spirit on this town

- An outpost of Rome
- A poor church in a rich town ('out of their extreme poverty')
- Paul in prison
- Conversion stories
- Lydia, the Jailor, Slave girl, the Palace guard and Caesar's household
- An affectionate letter to practical friends who supported him
- First Christian community in Europe

1. Philippians 1v1-11 - a people who obviously belong to God

Paul introduces us to the main themes of his letter in the first few verses:

- a Community and calling (v1,2) cf Acts 16
- b Grace of God (v3,4) leads to thanks and joy despite problems
- c Confidence in God (v5,6) wherever you are God is at work in you
- d Coming of Christ - live life in the light of a secure eternity

APPLICATION TIME:

1. What sort of things 'lock you up in a prison' in your life at home, work and church?

2. What advice can you draw from Paul's first chapter to help you get released?

3. Name one thing that you want God to deal with through your doing this study this term?

2. Praying for ourselves and others

a **Motivated by love** (v4,7,8) compare 2 Corinthians 5v14. Christ is mentioned 7 times in the first 11 verses

b **Motivated by truth** (v9) deception versus holding to biblical truth

c **Motivated by wisdom** (v10) i.e. living skilfully the 'stuff' of the Wisdom literature in Scripture

d **Motivated by faith**

e **Motivated by praise and glory to God**

APPLICATION TIME:

1. In light of the above motivations, identify situations in your own life that
need prayer at the moment
2. In faith, ask for *God's* wisdom and allow His Holy Spirit to challenge your
motives
3. Agree together in prayer for breakthrough in these situations

NOTE - you might like to break into 2 or 3s to keep the personal privacy of these situations.

SESSION 2

Philippians 1v12-30 Living on earth as citizens of heaven

Background:

The guiding principle in Philippians is "but our citizenship is in heaven and we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ".

The church was a colony of heaven in Philippi. The people of Philippi had Roman citizenship in the same way Christians and the church are heaven's outpost on earth, but we are called to live thoroughly engaged with life here

as well. This section helps us to know how to do this. "Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of Christ" (v27)

What were Paul's circumstances?

In what ways did Paul struggle and suffer?

Study Philippians 1v12-14

Paul does not see his suffering as being forgotten by God, or overlooked by God, or even attacked by Satan. He sees it as an opportunity for the gospel.

To examine other relationship struggles that Paul had, look at 2 Timothy 4v9-18 which Paul wrote at the end of his life.

1 God's purpose for us

a. The preaching of the gospel (v15-18)

- the Palace guard
- other Christians looking on
- not preaching for personal profit, but preaching for love

b. Living a fruitful life (v19)

- There is a relationship between intercession and breakthrough from the Holy Spirit
- The church called to pray
- Expectation of victory assured
- Living a Christ centred life
- Expectation of results

c Competing as one man (v27) cf Hebrews 12v1,2

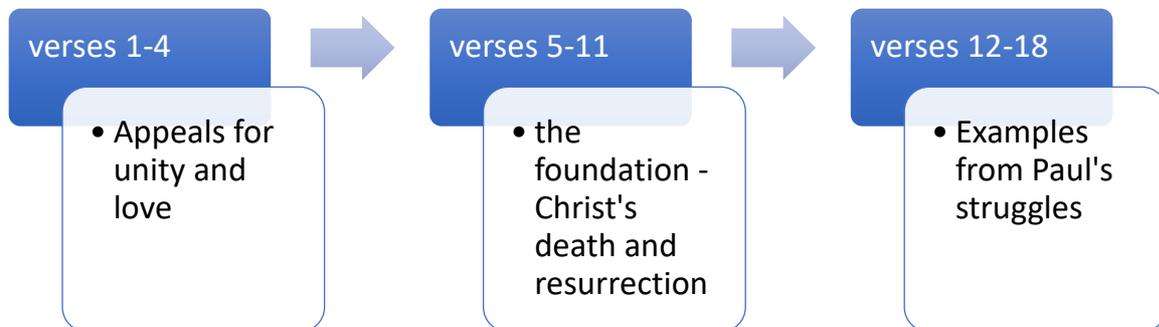
- an athlete metaphor rather than a soldier
- an exhortation to unity
- an exhortation to courage
- embracing *God's* call
- empowering of the Spirit

APPLICATION TIME:

What things need to change in our church/in us for this metaphor of 'competing as one man' to be fulfilled?

SESSION 3

Philippians 2 Unity in self forgetfulness



Followed in verses 19-30 with examples taken from Timothy and Epaphroditus

1 Appeals for unity and love (v1-4)

- a. List the arguments Paul draws upon in verses 1-4

For example:

- Encouragement from being in Christ
- The Spirit's intimacy
- -----
- -----
- -----
- -----

- b. **Beware selfish ambition** (cf Matthew 16v1ff)

'Humble yourself' is a uniquely Christian virtue. It means not looking for place or honour. It was despised by the Greek culture Paul was writing into as not being warrior-like. Seeing yourself as you are before God with sober judgement.

- c. **One another and the church at large**

Not being confined to the things you are touching/doing but also the things that others are called into. The word 'one another' occurs almost 40 times in Paul's letters.

- d. **Personal Testimony**
- e. **The challenge of being in a team**

2 **Christ's death/resurrection is Foundational to our thinking** (v5-11)

We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us grasp the spiritual realities and work them out in every day life. These verses are probably an early Christian hymn or creed.

- a. **Risking glory**
- b. **The death on the cross**
- c. **God's servant**
- d. **Reminder that God's glory will prevail**
- e. **Jesus Name above all names**
- f. **Mark 10v35-40 the baptism of suffering**

3 **'Continue to work out your salvation'** (v12-18)

Note: in what ways are our attitudes in relationships influenced by our home life and childhood? E.g. boys tend to emulate the behaviour of their fathers towards their mothers.

This 'working in us' is...

- working in us ceaselessly
- working in us effectively
- working to empower us
- working through our relationships in the church
- working to make us light bearers (like the Olympic torch of the day)

APPLICATION TIME - focus on verse 14, 'do everything without complaining or arguing'. How can we achieve this?

4 The example of Timothy (v19-24) and Epaphroditus (v25-30)

WHO IS TIMOTHY?

Study Acts 16v1-5; 2 Timothy 1v3-7; 2 Timothy 3v10-15 and answer the questions

a. Who is Timothy? _____

b. Where is he from? _____

c. Was he a Jew? _____

d. What was his reputation like? _____

e. Who were the great influences on his life? _____

f. What benefit did they give him? _____

g. How did they teach him? _____

- He had a servant mind (2v21)
- He had a servant's training (2v22)
- He had a servant's reward

WHO IS EPAPHRODITUS?

A Gentile member of the Philippian church who risked his health and life to carry missionary offerings to the apostle in Rome.

Identify and list ways in which Epaphroditus behaved as a

- A balanced Christian
 - A burdened Christian
 - A blessed Christian
-
-
-

SESSION 4

Philippians 3-4 A call to Christ-centred maturity

This chapter introduces us to four big truths which can safeguard our souls as we go through our journey here on earth. In many of Paul's letters he identifies similar truths to combat the potential hazards and stumbling blocks of the Christian life.

Paul states 'this is how we should stand firm' (4v1).

In chapter 3v1 Paul advises rejoicing - 'this is a safeguard for you'

WHAT DOES 'SAFEGUARDING' MEAN?

HOW DOES IT APPLY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE?

We can summarise chapter 3 as follows...

Verses 1-11	Verses 12-16	Verses 17-21
PAUL'S PAST - a strict Jew	PAUL'S PRESENT - like an athlete	PAUL'S FUTURE - heaven!
'I Count' (v7-8)	'I press' (v12-14)	'I look forward' (v20-21)
NEW VALUES - grace not law	NEW VIGOUR - by God's power cf Galatians 3v1-5	NEW VISION - Christ's coming and transforming power

1. Grace versus legalism (v1-11)

Study the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15v11-32)

a. In what ways did the youngest son fail?

b. How did the Father demonstrate 'grace' towards the youngest son?

c. In what ways did the older son fail?

d. How did the Father demonstrate 'grace' towards the oldest son?

WHICH SON ARE YOU?

Grace versus legalism continued...

- The place of the Law, Grace and Jesus. Look up John 8v1-11 and compare with Galatians 3v23-25. Make a list of the lessons you can draw from a comparison of these two scriptures about this subject.

NOTE - Paul uses a strong word 'Beware' 3 times emphasising how the Law can end up being a curse to us (Gal 1v8,9), and can make us fools (Gal 3v1)

2 Knowing Christ (v 7-11)

- a. A love that expels all other loves
- b. A love that puts the past to death
- c. A love that makes us righteous before God
- d. A love that guarantees our future

APPLICATION TIME!

From your own experience of faith, and salvation, and daily life share examples of experiencing God's grace personally.

3 Pressing on towards the goal (v12-16)

See also 2 Timothy 4v8; 1 Corinthians 9v24

There are two facets to these verses which can help us in our walk of grace

- a. Christ 'laid hold' or literally 'seized' us for an eternity with Him. The 'prize' is eternal life with God which I keep my eye on as I run the race here on earth.
- b. Christ has 'seized' me for a purpose. Verse 12 says 'I press on to take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of me'

Both interpretations are true and need to be held together. We run the race here on earth knowing that we have an eternal reward.

My Testimony:

List down the things for which Christ has laid hold of you generally e.g. to give me eternal life,

List down the things for which Christ has laid hold of you specifically i.e. His purposes,

Pray for each other bringing each of your answers to Him.

4 Investing in eternity

'Transformed' bodies? Look up 1 Corinthians 15v42-44. What will our bodies be like in eternity?

Our bodies now:	Our heavenly bodies:
Perishable	Imperishable
Dishonourable	Glorious
Weak	Powerful
Natural	Spiritual

Wow! What a future to look forward to!

Complete the table below by studying the verses and drawing out one truth that encourages you about our eternal destiny -

John 14v2,3	
Romans 8v18-21	
2 Corinthians 4v17,18	
Ephesians 1v5,6	
2 Timothy 4v8	
1 Thessalonians 4v16,17	
Revelation 21v3-5	

Session 5

Philippians 4v2-end

1 Unity which ends conflict (v1-4)

One of the greatest enemies to our mission together is breakdown of relationships. It splits churches, it divides teams, it causes mission teams in other countries to have to return home with shame. It is a big theme and a real concern of Paul in this letter - UNITY.

It was at Philippi that Paul met prominent women like Lydia who took a special interest in his welfare and mission. Actually, it brought many outstanding women in other places to excel in the same way. Chapters like Romans 16 show verse after verse of women who were Paul's fellow labourers. How tragic, therefore, that at Philippi there should be personal disputes which were polarising the church.

What advice does Paul give?

What advice does Jesus give in Matthew 18v15-17?

2 Prayer which brings peace (v4-7)

Even though Paul is in chains and in dreadful circumstances, he is able to find joy in the Lord. Often we can feel failure in ourselves because of our circumstances or our reactions. In that situation, we should not yield to being depressed or listen to Satan's attacks on our worth. Our worthiness comes from Christ's death on the cross and the Father's love for us. Joy is mentioned 16 times in this letter. Someone has said that 'joy is the serious business of

heaven', and we need to be serious about joy! Paul urges us to 'pray with thanksgiving bringing our requests to Almighty God'.

Don't give up on praying. 'Fear not' is a common Bible expression declared from heaven, for example at the resurrection appearances. Fight discouragement as if it were a sin.

In pastoral ministry we must take care not to collect anxieties. Try to develop a discipline of bringing these anxieties to the Lord. These verses encourage us to not let fears or worries cripple us. Fear and faith are antagonistic to each other. Anxiety freezes our souls.

Some practical advice for when we are anxious and fearful...

- Songs that warm the soul - e.g. King David in Psalms 56 and 57
- Bring our anxieties to the Lord - take comfort from songs such as 'Father I place into your hands' SoF 97
- Pray and talk with mature leaders
- Don't make important decisions when you are in a state - you might regret it later
- Use the spiritual gifts such as tongues - see 1 Corinthians 14v1-4
- Take note and read the promises of God

Can you add to this list?

3 Thinking that restores joy

Verse 7 is a promise. Note also Colossians 3v12. Remember that Jesus is king over the church and God is never overwhelmed by its circumstances.

In verse 8 Paul is encouraging the Philippians to embrace all that is good and wholesome in our lives in this World.

In verse 9 Paul is saying 'follow my example', and whether we like it or not, people will follow our example as leaders! What we do speaks louder than what we say.

4 Giving that pleases God

There was a special relationship between Paul and the Philippians such that they materially blessed him in his ministry on a regular basis. These people are the

Macedonians of 2 Corinthians 8 v1-5 which makes this section even more remarkable.

APPLICATION TIME:

Identify the verses in 2 Corinthians 8 which specifically refer to the Macedonians. List 4 aspects which characterised their giving

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

These people have entered into the 'grace of giving' and have been released from the bondage of 'mammon' (Read Matthew 6v19-24).

Some principles from Philippians 4

- 'I have learned the secret of being content' (v12)
- 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' (v13)
- 'I am looking for what might be accredited to your account' (v17)
- 'My God will supply every need' (v19)

The whole letter is sandwiched between the statements '**Grace**' to '**All the saints (the ones made holy by Jesus' work on the cross i.e. all believers in Jesus!)**' - may that same flavouring pervade our fellowship together in Christ.