

STUDY

Free Bible Study Guide PDF for Beginners (Philippians)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A free 4-session starter study through Philippians, built for anyone new to Bible study. Print it, no sign-up, no catch.

A free 4-session starter study through Philippians, built for anyone new to Bible study.

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.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14 (NIV)

The study guide

SESSION 1 · PHILIPPIANS 1

Confident Joy

Paul writes from a prison cell, yet the first thing he does is thank God for the people he loves and pray for them with joy, certain that the God who started a good work in them will finish it.

1. What does Paul say he is praying for the Philippians in chapter 1, and what reasons does he give for his joy even while in chains?

Paul prays that their love would grow more and more in knowledge and depth of insight (Philippians 1:9), so they can discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ (Philippians 1:10). His joy comes from their partnership in the gospel from the first day (Philippians 1:5). Even his chains have served the gospel, and he rejoices that Christ is being preached (Philippians 1:12-18).

2. Why is Paul so confident that the good work God began in them will be carried on to completion, and where does that confidence come from?

Paul's confidence rests on God and not on the Philippians. It is the one who began the good work who will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6). God does not start a work in his people and leave it half done. That promise reaches all the way to the day of Christ Jesus.

3. Where in your own life do you need to trust that God is not finished with you yet, that the work he started in you is still going?

Leader's note: This question is for the person who feels unfinished, or stuck. Read Philippians 1:6 slowly, and notice that the promise is about what God will do. Ask each person to name one area where they have been tempted to think God has given up on them, and to hear this verse over it.

SESSION 2 · PHILIPPIANS 2

The Mind of Christ

Paul holds up Jesus as the pattern for the whole life, the one who let go of every right and took the lowest place, and calls the Philippians to that same humility so they shine like stars in a dark world.

1. How does Paul describe what Jesus gave up and what he received in Philippians 2, and what does he ask the Philippians to imitate?

Jesus, who was in the very nature of God, did not use equality with God to his own advantage. He made himself nothing, took the nature of a servant, and humbled himself in obedience to death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8). Because of this God exalted him to the highest place, and every knee will bow (Philippians 2:9-11). Paul asks the Philippians to have the same mindset (Philippians 2:5).

2. What does it mean to value others above yourself, and why does Paul tie that humility so closely to the example of Jesus?

To value others above ourselves is to look outward to their interests as well as our own (Philippians 2:3-4). It does not mean pretending we are worthless. Paul ties this humility to Jesus because Jesus is the pattern. He gave up what was his by right, for our sake, and he asks his people to live by that same love.

3. Who in your life would notice if you started putting their interests ahead of your own this week, and what would that actually look like?

Leader's note: This question is meant to be small and specific. Philippians 2:4 says to look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. Ask each person to name one real person, a spouse, a neighbor, a coworker, and one simple thing they could do to put that person first this week.

SESSION 3 · PHILIPPIANS 3

Knowing Christ

Paul lists everything he once counted as gain, his pedigree, his record, his religion, and then calls all of it loss for the sake of knowing Christ, straining forward like a runner toward the finish line.

1. What does Paul say he counts as loss in chapter 3, and what is the one thing he counts as gain instead?

Paul lists what he might have leaned on: circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, zealous, and faultless in keeping the law (Philippians 3:4-6). He counts all of it as loss for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:7). What he counts as gain is "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8), and being found in him (Philippians 3:9).

2. Why would Paul call his impressive religious resume garbage compared to knowing Christ, and what does that tell you about what he treasures?

Paul's heritage was not evil. It simply could not compare to Christ, and it could not make him right with God. The righteousness he wants comes from God through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9). The strong language shows what he treasures most. He wants to know Christ, and the power of his resurrection (Philippians 3:10).

3. What are you holding onto that you would have to loosen your grip on to press on toward Christ, and what would it cost you to let it go?

Leader's note: This question asks what we lean on for our worth or safety besides Christ. That might be a record, a role, money, or approval. Paul says he forgets what is behind and strains toward what is ahead (Philippians 3:13). Give people a quiet minute to name one thing, and to ask God for help loosening their grip.

SESSION 4 · PHILIPPIANS 4

The Peace of God

Paul ends with the lines people carry for a lifetime, rejoice always, do not be anxious about anything, bring it all to God in prayer, and learn the secret of contentment in plenty and in need.

1. What does Paul tell the Philippians to do with their anxieties in chapter 4, and what does he promise will happen when they do?

Paul says not to be anxious about anything. In every situation, with prayer, petition, and thanksgiving, we present our requests to God (Philippians 4:6). The promise is that the peace of God, which is beyond understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

2. Paul says he has learned to be content in any situation. What do you think that secret is, given everything he has written in this letter?

Paul says he has learned the secret of being content in any situation, whether well fed or hungry, in plenty or in need (Philippians 4:11-12). The secret is not a technique. He says, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). His contentment rests on Christ and not on his circumstances, and the whole letter shows it.

3. What is the one worry you most need to bring to God in prayer right now, and what would it look like to actually hand it over?

Leader's note: This question invites each person to name one specific worry and hand it over in prayer. Peter puts it simply: "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Pause and pray together, letting each person say their worry out loud or silently, and remind them that God cares about it.