

| PHILIPPIANS | SMALL GROUP STUDY
A GUIDE TO LIVING IN THE
WAY OF JESUS

Crosspoint Community Church

Philippians is a twelve-week study that focuses on living in the way of Jesus.

Each week will encourage your group to share stories, study God's word, and support one another through prayer.

CONTENTS

week 1: **Pursued**

week 2: **Friends**

week 3: **Forward**

week 4: **Unity**

week 5: **Humility**

week 6: **Work**

week 7: **Shine**

week 8: **Servants**

week 9: **Know**

week 10: **Purpose**

week 11: **Rejoice**

week 12: **Content**

| Introduction |

The Bible is undoubtedly the most widely read and influential book ever composed—which is one of the reasons why we are so committed to diving into this book when we gather together in small groups. Reading and understanding the Bible, however, can often be quite difficult. Written over 2,000 years ago by a variety of authors in different places at different times in different languages to different people and for different reasons can make grasping its meaning a challenging task. Recognizing such interpretive complexity, however, need not get us down. Obtaining a better understanding of the world in which the authors wrote and readers read will help us better understand and apply this book to our lives. The following introduction is designed to do just that.

| Author |

Most scholars agree that the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. The consensus is strong and no serious doubts exist that would suggest otherwise. The letter claims to have been written by Paul with Timothy present (Phil. 1:1). Paul most likely met Timothy on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14), but did not start traveling with him until his second missionary journey when the church at Philippi was formed (Acts 16). As such, both Paul and Timothy helped found and establish the church at Philippi along with Silas and Luke. The details of Paul's life mentioned in the letter (Phil. 3:5-6) sync well with what we know about Paul from other NT writings (Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:4-5). Paul was a Hebrew from the tribe of Benjamin. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia in Asia Minor, but grew up studying in Jerusalem under a famous rabbi named Gamaliel. Paul was well educated. He was fluent in Greek and Hebrew. And he had considerable command in the areas of philosophy and theology. Paul originally belonged to a strict Jewish sect known as the Pharisees that was largely responsible for persecuting the early church. He became a follower of Christ when on his way to Damascus to arrest some of the early Christians (Acts 9). He spent the rest of his life advancing the kingdom of God by building the church and reaching people for Christ (Acts 10-28).¹

| Date & Location |

There is a lack of scholarly consensus regarding when Paul penned his letter to the Philippians. While it is clear that Paul was in prison when the letter was written (1:7, 13-14, 17), not everyone agrees *where* or *when* this imprisonment took place.² Three possible scenarios have been suggested. The traditional viewpoint is that Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians while imprisoned in Rome around A.D. 60-62. This position fits well with the internal evidence of Philippians (ex. the mention of the "palace guard" in 1:13) and the data we have from the book of Acts (28:16). The main objection to this position is that the correspondence between Paul and the church at Philippi would have required numerous trips and this is unlikely because the distance between Philippi and Rome was substantial—almost 1,200 miles. Those not satisfied with the traditional viewpoint have suggested that Paul wrote Philippians while imprisoned at Caesarea around A.D. 59-60. The fact that Paul was in prison at Caesarea for two years is used to bolster this position (Acts 23:33, 24:27). This viewpoint, however, is not free from objections. First, it does not resolve the correspondence issue. Caesarea was also a substantial distance from Philippi. Second, Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea was not as life threatening as Paul indicates in Philippians (1:19-26). The final position posits that Paul wrote Philippians while imprisoned at another location, but no documentation has survived that proves where or when. Most scholars in this camp point to the fact that Paul was imprisoned on numerous occasions

and not all of them are recorded in the NT (2 Cor. 11:23). As such, many within this camp suggest that Paul wrote Philippians while in prison at Ephesus sometime in the mid-50s to early 60s. The obvious problem with this last position is that we have no evidence suggesting that Paul was ever imprisoned at Ephesus. While nailing down the precise date is not entirely necessary, this study will assume that Paul wrote from Rome during the early 60s in correspondence with the traditional position.

| Recipients |

The city of Philippi was located in ancient Macedonia. Today the exact site is located in the northern part of Greece. Philippi was built around 360 B.C. and named after Philip of Macedon—who was the father of Alexander the Great. A famous battle took place in 42 B.C. between Antony and Octavian (on one side) and Brutus and Cassius (on the other). Antony and Octavian came out victorious. After their victory, they transformed Philippi from a Greek town into a Roman colony. Philippi was set aside for retired Roman soldiers to settle, live, and enjoy the privileges of self-government and freedom from taxation. By the time Paul showed up on the scene, Philippi was a prominent city that was thoroughly Roman in character (Acts 16:12). The book of Acts reflects this by suggesting that there were not enough Jews in Philippi to support a public place of worship (Acts 16:13). This may be why Paul does not quote a single verse from the OT in his entire letter to the Philippians—the Philippian church was comprised mostly of Gentiles.

| Occasion |

The church at Philippi was formed during Paul's second missionary journey. A woman named Lydia and a jailer overseeing Paul's imprisonment were among the first to become followers of Christ (Acts 16:14-36). A deep friendship then developed between Paul and the Philippian church. So deep was this friendship that the people at Philippi offered Paul financial help on more than one occasion (2 Cor. 8-9; Phil. 2:25, 4:16). Paul writes his letter to the Philippians as a grateful friend and a partner in the advancement of the gospel.³ He also takes the opportunity to address several different items: (1) To give an update on his current situation. The Philippians had been praying for Paul (1:19) and had sent a man named Epaphroditus from their community to take care of Paul's needs (2:25). Paul wanted to give them an update on his life circumstances and he spends the better part of the first chapter doing so. (2) To explain why Epaphroditus did not return to them immediately. Epaphroditus had been sent to Paul on behalf of the Philippian community but was overcome by sickness and almost died (2:27). Epaphroditus was "distressed" that his community heard he was sick and so Paul is writing to square things away and let them know how faithfully Epaphroditus had been in executing his task (2:25-29). He also commends Timothy as a faithful minister of the gospel (2:19-24). (3) To thank the Philippians for their generous gift (4:14-18). The Philippian church had sent a gift with Epaphroditus to help Paul (2:25). The fact that Paul waits to the very end of the letter to thank the Philippians for their gift actually highlights his profound gratitude. His expressed gratitude would have been the last thing the Philippians heard as they read his letter out loud as an entire community. Paul also uses the occasion of this letter to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the midst of persecution (1:27-30), to maintain unity by way of humility (2:1-11), to confront various opponents (1:15-17, 27-28, 3:1-4), and to challenge two women within the church (Euodia and Syntyche) to get along (4:2-3).

| Themes |

Many of the themes that run throughout Philippians correspond with the occasion and purpose of the letter—unity, humility, perseverance, contentment, gratitude, and so on. But several others are worth mentioning: (1) The advancement of the gospel. Paul repeatedly emphasizes his devotion to the advancement of the gospel (1:12-26, 3:1-14) and his partnership with the Philippian community toward that end (1:5). He even charges the Philippians to follow his example regarding these matters (3:15-17). (2) The growth of the Philippian community in living out the Christian life. Paul’s opening prayer (1:9-11) and charge to “live in a manner worthy of the gospel” (1:27) both highlight this theme. Paul desires the Philippians to fully manifest the new life they have been given in Jesus Christ. (3) Living with joy. The word “joy” is used more than any other word in Philippians.⁴ Paul desires the people of Philippi to be people that overflow with joy toward God and others.

| Conclusion |

So why should we study Philippians? Why should we give it our time and attention? Put simply, because Philippians challenges us to live a life worthy of the gospel—a life that is defined by unity, humility, gratitude, joy, and contentment in the face of struggles, temptation, and opposition. This letter gives us a practical foundation for living out the Christian faith in ways that are meaningful and relevant. And so despite an almost 2,000 year gap, this short letter remains instructive for us today. It is rich with wisdom and insight, passion and conviction. It abounds with love and joy, support and encouragement. And it calls us deeper into the kingdom movement—a movement focused on the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notes:

1. For more information on Paul and his life take a look at *Paul: the Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (UK, Paternoster, 1997) by F.F. Bruce.
2. For a more in depth discussion regarding the possible date & location of Paul’s writing, check out Carson & Moo’s *An Introduction to the New Testament—Second Addition* (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 2005) or Gordon D. Fee’s introduction in *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995) in the NICNT series.
3. Several different “types” of letters existed in the ancient world to match the various occasions and purposes for writing. Gordon Fee has made a strong case that Paul wrote Philippians as a “letter of friendship” (Ibid, 2-7). He does not assume a patron-client relationship with his readers as he so often does in his other letters (ex. Galatians). Paul’s appeal to the Philippians was based on their “friendship” and “partnership” in the gospel.
4. The word “joy” occurs as a noun (*chara*) four times (1:4, 25; 2:2; 4:1), as a verb (*chairō, rejoice*) eight times (1:15x2; 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:4x2, 10), and the word “glad” occurs three times (2:17-18, 28).

SESSION 1 | Pursued

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

The story of the Bible is about pursuit. It is about God pursuing humanity with relentless love. And that story is still unfolding today. God has not stopped pursuing humanity. Right now God is pursuing you and me. At this very moment God is searching for us. He is looking for us. He is seeking after us. And he is not going to stop. God wants a deep and meaningful relationship with all of us. And he makes that available to us through the person of Jesus Christ. Today we will be challenged to pay attention to God's pursuing activity in and around us.

HG leader, identify the person in your home group who most recently celebrated their birthday. Everybody sing happy birthday to that person. Then have that person open your home group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Deeper relationships will begin to form as you share the different things that you have experienced in your life and hear about the experiences of others. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. When have you lost something really important to you? Share with your group what you lost and how you went about trying to find it. What was the end result? Did you find it? What happened?
2. How did you become a follower of Jesus? Share with your group the details of how you came to the conclusion that God was pursuing you in the person of Jesus Christ.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is not just a Bible study. You are not a group of study buddies. That is why you have spent the first part of your group sharing stories—because building friendships is an important part of being in a home group. But a home group is not just a social gathering either. You are not just a group of friends. What makes a home group different from a bowling league or softball team is that the people within the group want to become more like Jesus. One of the best ways to become more like Jesus is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word as a group.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Acts 16:6-40¹

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How were Paul & his companions led to Philippi (vs. 6-12)? How did they cooperate with the Holy Spirit?²
2. Where has God given you an open door to share your faith with others? How are you cooperating?³
3. What three individuals came to faith in Acts 16? What might this suggest about the diversity of the Philippian church?⁴ Do you see any diversity in your church community? What does this diversity look like?
4. There was no synagogue at Philippi (v. 13). What does this suggest about the Jewish population at Philippi? Along these lines, do you find it interesting that Paul & Silas are arrested, but Timothy & Luke are not (v. 20)?⁵
5. When have you encountered negative stereotypes or opposition when sharing your faith? Share a story.
6. Why did the owners of the slave girl fail to respond to God?⁶ What prevents you from responding to God?
7. Look at the way God used circumstances to draw people to faith? How did God draw you to faith?⁷

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways is God pursuing you right now?
2. In what ways is God pursuing those around you right now?
3. How are you being challenged to participate with God's pursuing work in and around you?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to identify one way that God is pursuing you and one way to participate in God's pursuit of others. It could be a simple act of love—a smile, a word of encouragement, or maybe it will involve verbally sharing the Good News about Jesus. But pay attention to how God is pursuing you and be available to participate in the pursuit of others. Then write both experiences down and spend some time in reflection.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Acts 16:6-40 tells the story of how the church in Philippi was formed. Consider looking at the map in the back of your Bible to see where Paul and his companions were traveling.
2. The Holy Spirit prevented them from going to Bithynia (v. 7), but guided them to Macedonia (v. 9). Paul and his traveling buddies sensed God closing one door and opening another. They responded obediently and immediately (v. 10). Do you sense God closing doors and opening doors? How are you responding?
3. Perhaps it is at home, school, or work. How does God want to use you in his pursuit of others?
4. While it is not clear that the female slave came to faith (vs. 16-18), Lydia was a wealthy Jewish woman from Asia (Thyatira), the female slave was clearly lower class and probably Greek, and the jailer was a middle-class Roman citizen.
5. The fact that there wasn't a synagogue suggests that not many Jews lived in Philippi. The text also seems to suggest a racial bias against Jews. Paul was traveling with Silas, Timothy, and Luke. While Silas & Paul were both Jewish, Timothy & Luke were both Greek. Do you find it interesting that only Paul & Silas were arrested?
6. The owners of the slave girl were upset about their financial loss (v. 19). Their financial loss prevented them from noticing God's work around them. They failed to see how God was pursuing them.
7. This question coincides with the opening question that asks people to share their testimony. Please allow adequate time for these stories. If you have already spent time on this, go ahead and move on to the application questions.

SESSION 2 | Friends

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

True friends are there for you in life. They pick you up when you are down. They listen when you need to talk. They celebrate with you during times of success and support you in difficulty. They invite truth, honesty, and trust—depth, openness, and authenticity. These kinds of friends are rare. They are truly hard to find. The wise guard, invest, and cherish such friendships. But Christ-centered friendships go a step further. In addition to all of the above, friends that are centered on Christ partner with one another to advance the kingdom of God. Today we will see this kind of friendship in action and will be challenged to build these kinds of friendships with one another.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that most recently saw a movie in the theater. Have that person rate the movie with a letter grade (A+ being unbelievably awesome; F- being unimaginably horrible). Then have that person open your home group in prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the best compliment you have ever received? Share with your group the story leading up to this compliment and why it meant so much to you. How did it impact you?
2. What person has had the most encouraging influence on your faith? Share with your group about the person that has most encouraged you and supported you in your Christian faith (other than your spouse). What kinds of things did they do to encourage and influence you?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to self-disclose, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 1:1-11

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 3-8. What kinds of things do you notice that reflect friendship?
2. Look at v. 3. Why does Paul regularly pray for the Philippian community?¹
3. How are you partnering with others to advance the kingdom of God? What does this look like?
4. Do you regularly pray for people when they cross your mind? Why or why not?
5. What kind of an impact do you think regular prayer for others could have on your life?²
6. Look at v. 6. Why is Paul confident?³ How is God working in your life and the life of your community?
7. Do you take confidence in the promise that God will complete His good work in you?⁴
8. Look at vs. 9-11. What things does Paul pray for? How can we promote these things in one another?⁵

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we build Christ-centered friendships with one another?
2. How do you typically express your care and support for the most important people in your life?

GROUP EXERCISE:

The theme of *encouragement* runs throughout this passage. Paul starts this letter by encouraging the Philippian community and by expressing his affection for them. How can you encourage and show affection for one other? Take some time as a group to encourage one another. Go around your group and put each person on the spot. Then have people share words of encouragement as they feel led. The key here is to be genuine and sincere. How do you see God working in and through one another? What do you really appreciate about one another?

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request,

have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Paul prays with joy because of the partnership that he has with the Philippian community when it comes to the gospel (v. 5). These series of questions are intended to get your group to think through what it would be like to have friends that partner together to have a kingdom impact.
2. Regular prayer for others would undoubtedly impact the person being prayed for as well as the person praying. Not only can our prayers influence the life circumstances of others for the good, but we undeniably grow in our love and affection for others when we pray for them.
3. Paul is confident that God will faithfully see His work to completion.
4. The notion that God will faithfully carry out His work in your life and the lives of others should be tremendously encouraging. Great value can be found by simply resting in the truth of this promise.
5. Paul prays that their love may abound in knowledge and depth of insight, that they would discern what is pure and blameless, and that they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness—all to the glory of God. So how can your group help one another abound in love, discern what is pure and blameless, and be filled with the fruit of righteousness? Prayer is the obvious starting point. What else?

SESSION 3 | Forward

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Are you moving forward? The word forward implies motion. It implies movement toward a goal. But most people know that moving forward toward a goal can be difficult. Challenges typically arise. Opposition usually surfaces. One of the keys to overcoming opposition is to stay focused on moving forward. Today we get to see this in action. Paul's commitment to moving the gospel forward allowed him to overcome great opposition with joy. Today we will be challenged to examine our commitment to the goal of moving the gospel forward even in the midst of opposition.

HG leader, identify the person in your home group that has received the most speeding tickets. All right, speedy-McSpeedy, you're up. Please open your home group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced a difficult situation that brought about good? Share with your group about a time when you encountered a challenging situation that actually produced positive results.
2. When have you experienced opposition for doing what was right? Share with your group about a time when you endured hardship for doing the right thing.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 1:12-26

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 12-14. What happened because of Paul's imprisonment?¹
2. What does this reveal about Paul's attitude, focus, priorities, and ultimate concern in life?²
3. How do you typically respond to difficulties in your life? What happens to your focus, attitude, and priorities?
4. Would you say that your primary concern in life is seeing the Good News of Jesus Christ move forward?
5. Look at vs. 15-18. Why doesn't Paul care about the motives of others who preach the gospel?³
6. Have you ever struggled with the motives of someone who was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ?⁴
7. Look at vs. 20-26. Do you think these verses give a dreary outlook on life?⁵ Why or why not?
8. How has your relationship with Jesus Christ shaped the way you view and feel about death?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What difficulties are you currently facing? What is your attitude and focus in this situation?
2. What would need to change in your life for you to be able to quote Philippians 1:21 as true for you?
3. How can you—individually and collectively—be moving the gospel forward? Who can you be reaching out to?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to write a list of all your priorities and obligations in life. Then evaluate each one in light of Philippians 1:21. Pray through each priority or obligation. Surrender each one to God. Ask God how things might need to change. Commit to making those changes in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request,

have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Everyone in the palace guard was given the opportunity to hear the gospel due to Paul's imprisonment.
2. Paul viewed his imprisonment as an opportunity to reach people for Christ. The implication here is that Paul was more concerned about moving the gospel forward than he was his life circumstances and personal well-being.
3. Paul does not care about those who preach the gospel with false motives (envy, rivalry...etc) because Jesus was still being preached (v.18). The important thing for Paul was that the Good News was proclaimed.
4. Televangelists or those who preach the gospel to boost their own egos might be at the top of your list. But what does Paul's teaching suggest about the nature of our attitude toward such people? Do you think we can really discern motives?
5. Some may see Paul's attitude here as a gloomy perspective on life. But perhaps it is more reflective of what is truly most important—that is, Jesus Christ. What do you think?

SESSION 4 | Unity

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

The church is a community. And the word unity is part of the word community. The church is called to be one—to be harmonious and whole, unbroken and complete. But none of this implies uniformity. The church is marked by diversity—age, gender, ethnicity, language, personality, gifts, abilities, marital status and economic status to name a few. Unity within diversity. And this is never easy. Differences can cause conflict and conflict can cause division. But division isn't to have the last word. Today we will be called to pursue unity within community.

HG leader, identify the biggest germaphobe in your group. Have everybody in your group give that person a high five! Then have your newly identified germaphobe open your group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. When have you had a disagreement that you really regret?¹ Share a story about an argument that you had with someone that ruined the relationship. What variables were at play? How did you contribute?
2. When have you resolved an argument successfully? Share a story about an argument that you had with someone else that enhanced the relationship. What variables were at play? How did you contribute?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 1:27-2:4²

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at 1:27. What would it look like to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel?³
2. What changes would need to be made for you—individually and collectively—to live worthy of the gospel?
3. Look at 1:28-30. How do you handle suffering? Do you try to escape from it as quickly as possible?
4. Do you have a place for suffering in your faith journey? Do you ever think of suffering as a gift?⁴
5. Re-read 2:1-4. What do you think is the underlining key to establishing and maintaining unity?⁵
6. Take 2:2. As a group, go through each concept and brainstorm practical ways to practice these things.
7. Do you think it is possible to value others above oneself without experiencing the love of Christ?⁶
8. Look at 2:3-4. Are you energized by opportunities to serve others or do you find them burdensome?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Is your home group unified? Be honest. Pursue unity.
2. Where do you notice diversity within your home group?⁷
3. How can you use the diversity within your group to your advantage?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to find one practical way to put the interests of others before your own interests. Then spend some time in reflection. How often do you put yourself first in your relationships? Think about your relationships with family members, co-workers, and friends. Write down a few tangible ways you can consistently put others first in each of those relational environments.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request,

have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. If you have already discussed this kind of question as a group, then add the word “recently” to both questions (ex. “When have you *recently* had a disagreement you really regret?”).
2. Although 2:1 starts the beginning of a new chapter, the “therefore” indicates that chapter 2 continues the exhortation starting in 1:27.
3. Encourage your group to look at the text for answers—not just say whatever comes to mind. Paul says things like, “stand firm in one Spirit,” “strive together with one accord for the faith of the gospel,” “be like-minded,” “have the same love,” and so on.
4. How would perceiving suffering as a gift change your behavior and attitude when you experience suffering?
5. The key is humility. Paul states that “in humility” we are to “value others above ourselves” (2:3). Next week we will see that Christ perfectly models the kind of humility that we are called to practice. So don't spend too much time on this one.
6. The answer to this question should be yes (ex. Gandhi). But do you think Christians are at an advantage? Why or why not?
7. Perhaps some differences will be obvious. But if your group is having a hard time, start by having people describe their personalities. Are you more type A or type B? Are you more flexible or inflexible? Answering these questions can help people gain a better understanding of themselves and those within the group.

SESSION 5 | Humility

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

We typically think of humility in terms of what a person lacks. So a poor person lives in humble circumstances because they lack material possessions. A nerdy person is considered inferior because they lack social skills. But what if true humility is not about what you lack? What if it is more about what you have and are willing to give away? The life of Jesus gives credence to this idea of humility. Jesus had it all. He was God incarnate. But he gave it away to redeem a sinful humanity. Today we will be called to humbly give ourselves away in love toward others.

HG leader, identify the person in your group who brushes their teeth the most. All right, pearly-whites, you're up. Please open your home group in a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you typically back down in an argument or do you tend to stand your ground? Share a story with your group about a time when your pride got in the way.
2. When have you witnessed authentic humility in action? Share a story with your group about a time when you saw someone demonstrate real humility.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 2:5-11¹

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at v. 5. What would change in your relationships if you started having the same attitude as Jesus?²
2. Is being humble different from letting people walk all over you? How do you balance this tension in your life?
3. Look at vs. 6-8. What important belief do these verses affirm? How do you think about this paradox?³
4. Jesus took the role of a servant. How have you experienced Jesus serving you in your life?
5. Look at vs. 9-11. How might these verses challenge common understandings about obtaining success?⁴
6. Who do you know right now that has not yet bowed their knee and confessed Jesus as Lord?⁵
7. What is the closest you have gotten to experiencing the kind of community here in 2:1-11?
8. How do you balance meeting your own needs and serving those around you?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In what areas of your life could you exercise more humility right now?
2. What is one very tangible way that you can imitate Jesus' humility in the next week?

EXERCISE:

Jesus modeled what it meant to be a servant in John 13 when he washed his disciples feet. Afterwards, he said, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (13:14). Jesus challenged his disciples to serve one another. And that challenge continues today. Get a basin of water and a few towels and wash each other's feet as a symbol of humility and service.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go

around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Many scholars believe that this part of Philippians was actually an early church hymn that would have been sung during their gatherings.
2. Try to get your group to be specific. When have you failed to have the attitude of Jesus in the last couple days? When have you manifested the attitude of Jesus in the last couple days?
3. The paradox in these verses is the belief that Jesus was fully God and fully human. The word translated “nature” in Greek literally means the inner essence or reality. The implication here is that Jesus was God in his very essence. This is affirmed at other places in the NT (Heb. 1:3). But Jesus was also fully human and did not set aside his divinity when becoming human. An orthodox explanation of this paradox is that Jesus voluntarily set aside the normal use of his divine attributes (ex. omniscience) when becoming a human being without compromising his divine nature.
4. Many view the road to success as a competitive process of one-upmanship. Jesus' life suggests that success comes through sacrifice.
5. How can your group be intentionally building relationships with those who do not yet follow Jesus?

SESSION 6 | Work

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Work is not a fun word. Most people do not like the word or the action it implies. Some people even have an allergic reaction to work. They break out in a nasty rash just thinking about having to do it. Okay, that's a stretch. But the whole concept of work is certainly unpopular—especially when it comes to matters of faith. The belief that a person is saved by faith and not by works has often overshadowed an emphasis on effort. But salvation through faith is not at odds with effort or work. Today we will see that there is a legitimate place for faith-related work.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that has broken the most bones in their body in their lifetime. All right, Klutzy-McKlutzy, go ahead and open your home group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the best job you had growing up as a kid. Share with your group the best job you had as a kid growing up and what made it so great. And if you remember, tell your group how much you got paid.
2. What was the worst chore you had to do around the house as a kid? Share with your group your least favorite chore and what made it so bad. Did you ever not do it? What happened?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 2:12-13

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the "therefore" in v. 12 connect to the previous section? What is the "therefore" there for?¹
2. Look at v. 12. What does it mean to work out your salvation? Is this different from working for salvation?²
3. What do you think this work looks like? Is this an individual command, a corporate command, or both?³
4. How does your work and effort intersect with God's work & effort in your life? How do these two connect?
5. What kinds of things do you do on a daily basis that help you work out your salvation with fear & trembling?
6. The word "work" (v. 13) means *to energize or enable*. How has God been energizing your faith lately?
7. Look at v. 13. Why does God work in followers of Jesus?⁴ This is not a trick question.
8. What purpose do you sense God fulfilling through you?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What changes need to be made in your life to work out your salvation?
2. How can you better participate with God's work in your life and connect to his purpose and mission?

EXERCISE:

This week your challenge is to take some inventory of your life. Set aside 15-20 minutes and do some reflection on where all your time goes in a given week. Then ask yourself if there is enough space in your life to work toward maturity in Christ and participate in his kingdom. Close by asking God where he is at work in and around you and then commit to making this work a top priority in your life.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is

announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. The “therefore” connects to what immediately precedes—that is, the emphasis on Christ’s obedience to the Father to go to the cross.
2. There is a great difference between working *for* your salvation and working *out* your salvation. The former is tremendously problematic and leads to works-righteousness (the idea that we can earn our way to heaven) whereas the latter implies putting forth effort to grow in the character of Jesus Christ.
3. I would suggest that it is both. This letter was originally written to a community and many of the commands are in the plural (2:1-4). But fulfilling this command must ultimately start with the individual. We are to work out our salvation individually and corporately while supporting one another toward that end.
4. God works in us to fulfill his good purpose. The goal of our work must be to carry out God’s good purpose.

SESSION 7 | Shine

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

An object will shine to the degree that it reflects the light around it. So a piece of jewelry sparkles and dazzles as it reflects the light in the room. Do you realize that God has created you to shine? He did. He created you to dazzle and glisten, to shimmer and sparkle—to truly shine. But in order to shine bright, you need to reflect light. And not just any light—but the one who is the Light. You are to shine, sparkle, and dazzle as you reflect the character of Christ. Today’s passage reminds us that we can shine like the stars in the sky as we hold fast to the word of life.

HG leader, identify the person in your group who drinks the most coffee. All right, caffeine addict, you’re up. Open your group in a time of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who do you most look up to when it comes to matters of faith? Share with your group the person you most admire when it comes to living for Jesus Christ. What makes you look up to them so much?
2. When have you tarnished the reputation of Jesus in the world? Share with your group about a time when you did not represent Christ well. What happened? What were the ramifications? Share the story.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 2:14-18

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 14-15. How are followers of Jesus supposed to stand out in the world?¹
2. Do you think we are doing a good job of this? What are we known for in the world?²
3. What areas of life are most likely to cause you to fight and grumble with other people?
4. Look at v. 14. Do you think that how we interact with one another affects how others perceive us?
5. Can you think of a time when you saw a group of people really shine for Jesus Christ? Share that story.
6. Look at v. 15. Why does Paul want to boast? Is this arrogant or conceited on his part? Why or why not?³
7. Look at vs. 16-17. How does Paul model all the different principles outlined in this section?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How brightly are you shining right now for Jesus Christ?⁴
2. What is preventing you from shining brighter—individually and collectively?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to take some inventory of your life. Set aside 15-20 minutes and consider each of your environments in a given week (family, work, friends, and so on). Then, in God's presence, evaluate how brightly you are shining with the character of Jesus Christ in each of those areas. Don't focus entirely on your shortcomings. This is not about feeling guilty. Allow God to affirm you and commend you. Then simply resolve to make any adjustments that he points out to you.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is

announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Two things could be noted: (1) they demonstrate unity by avoiding grumbling and arguing against one another; and (2) they live lives that are blameless and pure on a moral level. Notice also that these verses start with the word *everything*. This is to be the case in everything believers do—every dimension and aspect of life.
2. Start with the big picture. What is the reputation of Christians in general? What is the reputation of your church in your local community? What is your reputation as a Christian in the lives of others?
3. Paul wants to boast that his investment in the Philippian community was worth the energy and work.
4. Think about the different environments you frequent on any given week—work, home, grocery store...etc. How brightly are you shining in each of these different environments?

SESSION 8 | Servants

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

A servant is someone that gives him or herself in service to another. Jesus exemplified what it means to be a servant. He lived a life of service and self-sacrifice. And we are too. Following Jesus is ultimately about service. It is about giving oneself in service to Christ and to others. Today we get a glimpse of two people that devoted themselves to service—service to Christ and to others. By reading about their service to the kingdom of God, we will be challenged to become a community of faithful servants that are characterized by outrageous love and self-sacrifice.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that wakes up the earliest each morning. All right, early-bird, you're up. Please open your home group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was your biggest supporter as a kid? Who instilled a sense of confidence in you? Share with your group about a teacher or coach that really believed in you when you were growing up.
2. Who do you know that really models humble service to others? Share with your group one person you really admire that humbly serves the people around them. What kinds of things do they do?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 2:19-30

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is Paul exemplifying service by sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian community?¹
2. When have you had to give up something or someone to benefit another person or group of people?
3. Look at vs. 19-24. How does Paul describe Timothy? What kinds of things does Paul say about Timothy?²
4. Look at v. 21-22. Do you think that people like Timothy are rare? Why do you think this is the case?³
5. Could Paul's description of Timothy be said about you? Could your life be held up as an example for others?
6. Look at vs. 25-30. How does Paul describe Epaphroditus? What kinds of things does Paul say about him?⁴
7. Look at v. 30. Would you seriously risk your life for the work of Christ? Be honest.
8. Think about Paul's reason for sending these two individuals to Philippi. Do you do this much follow-up to ensure the spiritual growth of other people's faith? How far are you willing to go to help people grow spiritually?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What would need to change in your life for you to be described like those in the passage today?
2. What are some really practical and tangible ways that you can serve those around you this week?
3. How can you adjust your plans or schedule to create more opportunities to serve Christ and others?⁵

EXERCISE:

Your challenge this week is to create space in your life to serve those around you. Maybe it will be lending a helping hand to a neighbor or giving some extra time to help your spouse. Serve someone this week and then reflect on what you learned about yourself and your relationship with God through this experience.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request,

have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Timothy and Paul were very close friends and had participated in ministry together for a number of years. Given that Paul was under house arrest and facing possible death, it would only be natural for him to want a close friend by his side. But Paul is willing to put that aside so that Timothy can go and help the Philippian community.
2. Paul describes Timothy as someone that genuinely cares about the Philippian church and as one who puts the interests of Christ first.
3. Paul says that he does not have anyone else like Timothy. Does this include everyone Paul had ever known? Does this just include the people around him at that moment? Or does this mean that others are just not willing because of their own interests?
4. Paul describes Epaphroditus as a brother, a co-worker, a fellow soldier, and a messenger (v. 25).
5. Another way to get at this question is to consider what patterns are currently in your day-to-day activities that limit your ability to serve. What times in your day are you unavailable to God for service? How could this change?

SESSION 9 | Know

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

What do you value most in life? Your checkbook or your day planner will probably reveal the answer. Is it money or your career? Is it a hobby or leisure? Maybe it's religion. Now what if you were to actually achieve your dreams? So you got all the money you ever wanted, your career became successful beyond imagination, and so on. Then what? You can climb to the top of the ladder only to discover that there is nothing at the top. So what is the most valuable thing in life? Today's passage answers that question with the one word – *know*. So get ready to know!

HG leader, identify the person in your group that hits the snooze button the most before getting out of bed in the morning. All right, snoozer, you're up. Open your home group in a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. When have you invested time into something that was not worth the investment? Share with your home group about a time when you put a lot of effort into something that ultimately fell flat.
2. When have you bought something that did not measure up to the hype? Share with your group about a time when you bought something or received something that didn't fulfill your expectations?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 3:1-11

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 2-3. Why is Paul so stern in these verses? What is he coming against?¹
2. Have you ever met someone that said you need more than just faith to be saved? What did you think?
3. Talk about religious traditions. How are they valuable? Can they get in the way of knowing Jesus?²
4. What kinds of traditions or external behaviors are Christians pressured to keep or do on a regular basis?
5. Look at vs. 4-7. Why does Paul share his religious background here? What point is he trying to make?³
6. Do you think it is interesting that people can use religion to feel successful? Have you ever done this?
7. Look at vs. 7-11. What is the most important thing to Paul? What do we learn about the gospel here?⁴
8. What do you think it means to *know* Christ? How do you know that you know Jesus?⁵
9. Is there anything that you have given up for Christ that you wish you hadn't given up?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How much do you truly desire to know Christ? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10.
2. What priority does knowing Christ have in your life right now?
3. What has helped you get to know Christ better in life?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge this week is to identify one way that helps you feel connected to God and then engage in it at least 3 times. Some might feel connected to God by studying the Bible or praying, others might feel connected in worship or by being outside and encountering nature. Whatever it is, try to do it at least 3 times.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go

around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Paul is probably coming against a group of people known as the Judaizers. This group claimed that people had to add works of the law (ex. circumcision) to faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Paul's contention is that a person is made right with God by faith alone and that followers of Christ are set free from the OT law. Read Galatians for more on this.

2. Try to maintain a balance in discussion here. Some religious traditions have great value—prayer, fasting, and many others have helped people connect with God for generations. But sometimes these same practices or traditions can get in the way when they become obligations or are performed out of duty.

3. Paul is making the point that there is no room for confidence in works of righteousness when it comes to being in right relationship with God. And, if there was anybody who could have had reason to put confidence in such works, it was Paul. He lists seven advantages that would have given him reason for being confident—four of which he inherited and three of which he chose as a way of life (vs. 4-6).

4. The crucial thing we learn about the gospel here is that a person cannot earn salvation. We are saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

5. Elsewhere in the NT, knowing Christ is synonymous with keeping his commands (1 Jn. 2:3).

SESSION 10 | Purpose

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

Purpose is important in life. Without purpose life becomes pretty depressing. A lack of purpose makes life seem pointless and empty—inconsequential and insignificant. Life simply can't be sustained without purpose. Purpose gives us direction in life. It provides us with meaning and significance—hope and direction. It gives us a goal to pursue—fueling our ambitions and creating in us a drive to achieve, to stretch, to reach our full potential. But what should our purpose be? Today's lesson gives us the answer by pointing to the ultimate goal and objective of life.

HG leader, identify the person in your home group that has the most education. All right, smarty-pants, you're up. Open your group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. When have you felt most down on life? Share with your group about a time when life felt like it really lacked purpose and direction. What happened? How did you move beyond that place?
2. When have you felt most alive and full of life? Share with your group about a time when your life was full of meaning and significance. What variables were in play? How did it effect your outlook on things?

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 3:12-4:1

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think the race of faith is like a sprint or a marathon (vs. 12-14)? What implications does this have?¹
2. How do you think about the tension of straining forward without fully attaining the goal in this lifetime?²
3. What does this passage teach us about spiritual growth? Is it ever okay to plateau spiritually?³
4. Paul talks about straining forward. How can looking back hold us back? How can it help us move forward?
5. What part of your past is preventing you from moving forward toward a deeper relationship with Christ?
6. Paul pursues Jesus with focus, passion, and intention. How do you compare to Paul? Is your life similar?
7. How should having citizenship in heaven shape life on earth? What implications does this have for life?⁴
8. What kinds of personal goals have prevented you from pursuing the ultimate goal of growing in Christ?
9. Paul challenges people to follow his example (v. 17). Could you challenge others to follow your example?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the main goal you desire to attain in your life? Be honest.
2. If someone were to follow you for a week, what would they conclude is the purpose of your life?
3. Where are you right now in the race of knowing Christ? Are you running the race or watching others race?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge this week is to identify one thing that is holding you back spiritually. Surrender it to God. Then, prayerfully identify three practical and tangible ways to move forward in total dependence upon the Spirit of God.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is

announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. I would suggest that the race of faith is more like a marathon than a sprint. A sprint requires a short burst of intense energy to reach a goal whereas a marathon requires great persistence and perseverance over a long period of time. The race of faith is about progressive and continual growth over the span of one's life.
2. The key here is to wrestle with the fact that while we have already been given our true identities in Christ, we will not perfectly experience our true identities in Christ until the resurrection. That stated, we are to continue to strive forward and grow until that day arrives!
3. Paul suggests that there is no room for stalling out, growing stale, or reaching a plateau in your faith. We must keep pushing forward and growing.
4. Those with citizenship in heaven will focus on things eternal whereas those without such citizenship will focus entirely on earthly things. Do you primarily focus on things in this present world or do you maintain an eternal and kingdom mindset?

SESSION 11 | Rejoice

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

For most people joy is connected to positive life circumstances. So they rejoice when they pass the difficult exam. They rejoice when they get hired for the job. They rejoice when things go their way. This is only natural. But it is also rather shallow. It is a shallow form of joy because such joy is often completely absent when life gets difficult. The joy is only there during the good times. But true joy exists regardless of life's circumstance. True rejoicing is present even in difficulty. True joy, as we will see today, is found in the Lord—who is bigger than any life circumstance.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that exercised the most this past week. All right, over-achiever, you're up. Open your home group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the best thing that ever happened to you? Share with your group the best thing that ever happened to you. It could be anything—buying a house, graduating from college, winning a championship.
2. What is your high and low for this past week? Share with your group the best moment from this past week and the worst moment from this past week.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 4:2-9

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 2-3. Do you think that relational friction between two people can have a ripple affect on others?¹
2. How should followers of Jesus go about resolving conflict with one another? How can we promote unity?²
3. How do you typically resolve conflict? Do you prefer to address it right away or avoid it and ignore it?
4. How do you relieve anxiety in your life? What kinds of things do you do? What has been most helpful?
5. Look at vs. 4-7. What is the connection between anxiety, worry, rejoicing, and prayer?³
6. How can you rejoice or have joy in difficult life circumstances? What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?
7. Do you think that the command "do not be anxious about anything" is different from living a carefree life?⁴
8. What correlation is there between anxiety and our thoughts? How does what we think affect how we feel?⁵
9. How do you control your thoughts? What helps you suppress negative thought patterns and stay positive?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How anxious are you? Rate yourself on a scale from 1-10.
2. How can you give your worries and concerns to God in prayerful trust?
3. How can you allow the joy and peace of God to rule in your life in all circumstances?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to set aside 20-30 minutes and write down everything you are anxious about. Take some time to reflect on your thought patterns in each of these areas (how you are thinking about God and yourself). Confess where you have tried to take things into your own hands. Then surrender each item to God. Entrust everything to him. Remember, not everything depends on you! God is more than capable!

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request, have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go

around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

See You Next Week!!!

NOTES:

1. Consider, for example, how relational friction between two parents affects the rest of the family. Relational tensions that go unaddressed or unresolved can reap havoc not only in our lives, but also the lives of others. Reconciliation is an act of service on numerous levels.
2. Another question worth considering is how to promote unity between two people that are in conflict.
3. Paul uses four different words here to describe a believer's communication with God—prayer, petition, thanksgiving, and request. What connotations do each of these carry?
4. To be genuinely concerned about something is different from worrying about something. One can deeply care about a situation or problem while completely entrusting that situation or problem to God without worry.
5. How we think has direct bearing on how we feel. If we are constantly thinking about how overwhelming our situation is, we will feel stressed and anxious. Consider, also, that our thoughts and perceptions of a situation (a) often neglect to take the bigness of God into account and (b) are not always accurate. Both of these can increase anxiety levels without proper grounding.

SESSION 12 | Content

Introduction

HG leader, read the following out loud:

We live in a culture that makes contentment very difficult. Some estimate that the average American encounters over 3,000 advertisements per day—all of which communicate that we lack something that their product can provide. We are pushed to get the latest and greatest—the newest clothes, gadgets, and technology. Our culture is driven by the assumption that people are not content. But the Bible pushes in the exact opposite direction. Today we will see that followers of Jesus are called to be content in every situation they encounter in life.

HG leader, identify the person in your group that has the biggest sweet-tooth. All right, cavity central, you're up. Open your group with a word of prayer.

Tell Your Stories

It is now time for you to connect with one another in a more intentional way. Part of being a home group is getting to know one another and building friendships with each other. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing stories. Below are some questions to talk about as a group that should get people sharing their stories.

QUESTIONS:

1. If you were given a million dollars, what would you do with it? Share with your group what you would do with a million dollars. How would your life change. Be honest.
2. When have you desired something that everybody else seemed to have? Share with your group what that thing was and what it was like when you got it—a new pair of shoes, an iPod, or some other fun item.

Leadership Tips:

- Do not go in a circle. Try to create an atmosphere where people share when they are ready. Encourage people to share without being pushy.
- Make sure everyone shares. Be sensitive to those who take a bit longer to share their lives with others, but try to prevent one person from sharing too much and dominating the group discussion time.
- Listen intently and ask follow-up questions to show that you are engaged in the discussion.

Once everyone has had the opportunity to tell some stories in response to the above questions, you can transition your group into the next part of your gathering—the part where you study the Bible together.

Engage God's Word

A home group is a place where people support one another in becoming more like Jesus. And one of the best ways to do this is by studying, discussing, and responding to God's word together. Here are some Scripture passages and questions to get you started.

HG leader, identify someone with a Bible and have them read the following aloud:

Philippians 4:10-23

Leadership Tips:

- Consider reading from a few different translations. Sometimes different versions can spark different insights. Reading a passage more than once also helps it sink in more.
- Use the questions below as a springboard for discussion. Do not feel like you have to follow the study guide religiously or hit every question. These questions have been designed to help spark discussion in your group. Refer to them as needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Look at vs. 10-13. What is Paul's secret for being content? And how did Paul learn this secret?¹
2. How have you heard people quote v. 12? Do you think these applications are fair given the context?²
3. In what situations are you least likely to be content? In what situations are you most likely to be content?
4. What does contentment look like when you have an abundant amount of resources available to you?
5. Look at vs. 14-17. How had the Philippian community helped Paul financially in the past and the present?³
6. Given that Paul had learned the secret of contentment, why does he commend the Philippians for giving?⁴
7. How does this challenge you with regard to generosity? What opportunities do you have to give right now?
8. Look at v. 19. Do you really believe that? How do you think about God when you are in a time of need?
9. Why do you think Paul waited until this point in his letter to express gratitude for the gift he received?⁵
10. What are some of the main things you have learned or have been challenged by during this entire study?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How content are you right now? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10.
2. How well are you stewarding the resources God has given you? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10.
3. What stands in the way of you becoming a more generous person? What prevents you from giving more?

EXERCISE:

Your challenge for this week is to evaluate your level of contentment in life right now. What variables in your life are causing a lack of contentment? Why is that? What might need to change? Spend some time in prayer. Remind yourself of God's provision throughout your life. Close by entrusting your life to God's care.

Pray for One Another

It is good to share your stories. And it is good to talk about the Bible. But it is also important to hear what is going on in each other's life so that you can encourage and support one another. One of the best ways to accomplish that task is to take up prayer requests. Here are some directions to help you organize this time:

DIRECTIONS:

Give each person a small piece of paper. Instruct them to write their name on the top with a short description of their prayer request. Have each person fold their piece of paper and place it in a bowl located in the center of your group. Once everyone has submitted his or her prayer request,

have each person draw out a name. Make sure no one draws out his or her own name. Then, go around in a circle and have each person call out the name they drew. Each time a name is announced, have that person describe his or her prayer request to the group. After everyone has shared, close with each member praying for the person they drew out of the bowl. Encourage group members to take the prayer requests they drew out of the bowl with them throughout the week. This will ensure that each person in your group is being prayed for every day of the week.

Leadership Tips:

- Discourage people from sharing prayer requests for other people. These kinds of prayer requests will lead to a superficial home group. Encourage individuals to share prayer requests related to their own concerns, struggles, and needs.
- Don't pressure people to share beyond what they are comfortable sharing. While everyone is expected to share a prayer request, nobody should be required to share the most intimate aspects of their lives.
- Keep things moving. This is not the time for a group counseling session.
- Be sensitive to those who may not be ready to pray out loud—especially if they are new to your group. Consider designating someone to cover their prayer request until they are more comfortable praying with others.

End of Study

NOTES:

1. In contrast to the Stoic philosophers of Paul's day who insisted that self-sufficiency and contentment could be found within oneself, Paul argues that true contentment—regardless of circumstance—is found by trusting and relying on God to meet all of one's needs.
2. Perhaps you have heard this verse quoted before a big sports event or another high-pressure situation. Are such applications of this verse appropriate given that the context of this verse is primarily about finding the strength needed for contentment in any situation?
3. The Philippians had offered Paul financial support on at least three different occasions: (1) when Paul was at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16); (2) when Paul was at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:9); and (3) when Paul was in prison in Rome.
4. Paul does this in order to emphasize that he depends on God alone to meet all of his needs. But he also wants to thank the Philippians for being the vehicle through which God met his needs on this particular occasion. He is commending their generosity.
5. This letter would have been read out loud to the entire community. The fact that Paul waits until the end to thank the Philippians for their gift does not imply that it was an afterthought. Rather, this is the last thing the Philippians would have heard when they read the letter. Paul wants his expressed gratitude to be one of the last things they would hear, and therefore, would really remember.