



## BIBLE STUDY BASICS

# Philippians

*Instructions on living a life united with Christ*

In our world, people are pretty obsessed with themselves. But Paul says that Christ-followers must live a different way: a life of humility. First of all, Paul reminds us that we must think highly of others and rejoice in our relationships. Second, he reminds us that above all, we are to be united with Christ, aligning our will with his. As we take on Christ's mindset of humility, we will begin to see life and death as gain—not because we are glorified, but because Christ is.

This Bible Study Basics study can be done in any number of sessions you'd like, with the ideal number being 5–7 sessions. It includes excellent discussion questions for the text, fun icebreakers and activities to engage group members, clear application points, great tips on leading discussion, and information on how to make the study work for all levels of spiritual maturity.



# How to Use Bible Study Basics

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*We're so glad that you're using this study guide with your group. We know you'll gain a lot of wisdom through your discussion. Use this guide to make the most of this resource.*

## Decide How Many Meetings

Any of our **Bible Study Basics** can be covered as quickly or as slowly as you'd like. If the book you're studying has five chapters, you might plan on five meetings. Or to look at the passages more in depth, plan for ten meetings. Consider how long your group would like to meet to discuss this book of the Bible.

## Decide Which Themes to Cover

In this resource, each chapter is divided up into major themes that are covered in the text. As you discuss a chapter, you may choose to discuss only one of the themes or all of the themes in the chapter. Or you might focus most of your discussion on one theme and only briefly cover another. If you're going more slowly through the book, you'll be able to cover all of the themes more in depth. As you prepare for your study, consider what main idea or ideas you'd like your group members to walk away with.

### Choose 4–6 Questions

In the **Talk It Out** section, we've given you a variety of questions to choose from for your study, but please don't use them all! You simply don't have time to cover every single question we've written. Plan to cover 4–6 questions per meeting and choose them based on the themes you've chosen to cover. This will ensure you'll have enough time to discuss each of the questions thoroughly. If you have extra time, you can always ask additional questions.

### Do the Activity

Start your meeting with one of the **Start It Out** activities to engage your group members. If you're covering multiple themes in one meeting, just choose one activity. The Start It Out activities will get your group focused and thinking about the important themes of your study.

### Lead the Discussion

Use the tips and suggestions in “**Lead a Great Discussion**” and “**Engage Everyone in Your Group**” to make the most of your time together. This proven advice comes from the experts at [SmallGroups.com](http://SmallGroups.com).

### Identify Your Next Step

The **Live It Out** section provides a list of possible action steps to take as a result of your discussion. Applying what you've learned will be unique to each group member. Let group members choose one application step from the Live It Out section or come up with one on their own. You might also consider what your next step as a group will be.

### End With Prayer

Don't forget to share prayer requests. Pray that group members will follow through with their application. Thank God for all he's teaching you through your time together.



# Lead a Great Discussion

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*For many, facilitating a group discussion—especially in a Bible study—can be intimidating. But the goal isn't to have all the right answers or even to get through all the material. To lead a great discussion, get all your group members involved, and help them connect the discussion to their lives. This is what leads to life change, and that's the goal. Here are a few tips for leading a great discussion with your group.*

**Get to know each other.** Take some time, especially at the start of a new group, to get to know one another. As relationships develop, group members will be more likely to share authentically, which will help your discussion lead to life change. Share a snack, devote the opening 15 minutes to small talk, or intentionally linger after the meeting.

**Create a safe environment.** Trust makes your group a place where genuine community can form. Group members need to be able to trust that the group is a safe place—a place where they can get real and know that they will not be judged, gossiped about, and so on. Let everyone know that what's shared in group should stay in the group.

**Ask follow-up questions.** Many people default to staying pretty surface-level with their answers, so get in the habit of not letting them off the hook.

Ask more questions that follow up on their responses. Here are some examples of good follow-up questions for the short or simple answers that people often give:

- What makes you say that?
- How do you feel about that?
- How do you think that would've affected you if you'd lived at the time this was written?
- How would you explain your answer to a non-Christian friend or neighbor?

**Make sure the rubber hits the road.** Tell your group that by the end of the night you'll each decide how to apply what you're discussing. Otherwise you'll just leave a little smarter, rather than with changed lives. So whatever it is you're discussing, make sure to end with some application questions. Help your group members consider what the passage has to do with their lives today and what one thing they'll do differently this week as a result of your discussion. Use the Live It Out section as a guide for some ideas.

**Affirm everyone who shares.** When people share in the group—no matter how much you may disagree, or how theologically incorrect they may be—make sure they feel affirmed about their answer in the moment. Thank them for sharing. Having the courage to share is a big deal, and you'll want to recognize it. If someone says something theologically off, consider talking with the person outside of group, one on one. And make sure to ask for clarification first. The person may have simply misspoken. If they still hold on to the incorrect belief, you can lovingly point out the truth to them.

**Lead, don't teach.** Empower others to discover the truth of Scripture for themselves by asking questions and refraining from lecturing. Allow the Holy Spirit to move in your group members.

**Wait 30 seconds.** While it may be tempting to ask a question and then immediately answer it, doing so will create an unsafe environment for sharing, and group members will come to expect your answers. It takes at least 20 seconds for many people to process a question, so allow them time to think. If there's still no answer, rephrase the question.

**Pray together.** As you dig into God's Word, don't forget to pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. When you're finished with your discussion, pray for one another. Praying together not only brings your group members before God, but also allows your group members to care for one another.



# Engage Everyone in Your Group

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*Studying the Bible is for everyone—from not-yet believer to mature Christ-follower. To ensure you're engaging everyone in your meeting, use these tips.*

**Dedicate time to small talk and casual conversation.** As counterintuitive as that sounds, people need to get to know each other socially so they can come to understand each other spiritually. One great idea is to build a meal into your small-group time or dedicate a portion of your meeting to coffee and refreshments. The casual conversation over food will help build trust and deepen relationships within the group.

**Incorporate icebreakers at the beginning of your study time.** While icebreakers may not seem to have much lasting value, they actually go a long way in setting up a healthy environment that will help group members develop authentic relationships. Be sure to use one of the Start It Out activities to begin your meeting.

**Read Scripture from multiple translations during your study.** Use both a more traditional translation and a modern translation. Consider the differences in how the words are translated and the changes in language over the years.

**Research the historical context or commentaries for passages that will be studied.**

When you share the background information, you'll give all group members, regardless of their level of maturity, a common place to start. You'll find a great overview at the beginning of this study. Alternatively, have some of the more mature believers volunteer to do this research and present it at the meeting. Tap into their knowledge.

**Make it clear that all questions are welcome.** Whether they're questions of clarification or deeper analysis, members should feel safe asking what's on their mind. Deeper questions may push new believers to take the next step in their relationship with God; questions from new believers may prompt seasoned believers to take a second look at a familiar passage.

**Watch your language.** Don't assume everyone knows what *covenant* means—or any other “church” word, for that matter. Always clarify the meaning of these words with your group. Ask group members to explain the concepts to the rest of the group. This will both challenge mature believers to articulate their beliefs and help new believers understand biblical terms.

**Look for opportunities to break into smaller groups.** If your group is getting large, break into groups of three to five for portions of your discussion or prayer time. More people can share when there are fewer in a group.

**Empower those further along by asking them to help you in some way.** Allow them to organize aspects of the meeting, present background information on a passage, lead a discussion from time to time, or facilitate the group prayer.

**Let group members dig in at their own level.** As group members prepare for the meeting, make it clear you'd like everyone to read the passage you'll be discussing. Challenge more mature believers to read the passage each day of the week to see if they gain any new insights. Or challenge them to read the entire book for context (if it's a shorter book like an epistle). They could also incorporate journaling into their reading. Or assign a more challenging question ahead of time to mature believers to research and report back to the group. Stretch group members with homework that fits their stage, allowing them to choose for themselves which level is appropriate.

## Overview of Philippians



### Why read this book?

If you've ever had trouble seeing how faith can be dressed in everyday work clothes, Philippians is for you. It puts lofty truths into practical terms. And along the way you'll read about a gamut of human experience: joy, bitterness, unity, bickering, arrogance, humiliation. Read Philippians to peek into the heart of its writer—and to be drawn closer to the one who was foremost in his heart: Jesus Christ.

### Who wrote this book and to whom was it written?

While under house arrest in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote to believers in the city of Philippi, located in northeastern modern-day Greece. It lay ten miles inland from the modern-day port city of Kavalla.

### When was it written?

About AD 61, when Paul was under guard while awaiting trial. He was living in his own rented house, where for two years he was free to impart the gospel to all who came to him (Acts 28:30).

### Why was it written?

Paul wrote to thank the Philippians for sending him money to help defray his living expenses (4:10–18). Paul also wanted to warn them against false teachers and urge them toward greater unity.

### What is the background of this book?

Philippi, a prosperous Roman colony, was where Paul planted the first church on European soil (Acts 16:11–40), probably around AD 50. When Paul moved on, the church occasionally sent him aid—the only church to do so in those early days (4:15).

### What to look for in Philippians:

You'll find one of the Bible's most prominent psalms of praise to Jesus (2:6–11). You'll see the futility of religious activities and achievements compared to a relationship with Christ (3:4–11). And you'll gain practical tools to help reshape your thinking according to God's ways (4:4–9).

—From the *NIV Quest Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2011)





## CHAPTER ONE

# Thanksgiving and Prayer

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## Philippians 1:1–11

### ► Start It Out

Name something that you learned in school that has not affected how you live in any way (e.g., geometry proofs). Name something that you learned that has affected how you live. What is the difference between knowledge that causes us to take action and change, and knowledge that doesn't?

### ► Talk It Out

- Why might Paul have addressed this letter to “all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons”?
- How might the Philippians have felt to receive a letter that starts with “I thank my God every time I remember you”?
- Why does Paul see the Philippians as partners in the gospel?
- Why do you think Paul was so thankful to have partners in his work?

- When do you like to work alone? When do you like to work on a team? Why?
- What is the good work that Christ has started?
- What is the “day of Christ Jesus”?
- What does Paul pray for the Philippians?
- What is the purpose of the knowledge that Paul prays for the Philippians?
- Should knowledge always affect how we live? Why or why not? What about biblical knowledge?
- How can we discern what is best? What do you do?
- How can we remain pure and blameless?
- What words or phrases let you know that Paul cares deeply for the Philippians?
- How does the bond of Christ in Christian friendships make them deeper?
- When have you had a deep connection with another Christian, though he or she was very different from you?

### ► Live It Out

- Consider who has teamed up with you in life. Find a way to thank them this week.
- If you focus more on accumulating knowledge than on allowing it to mold you, ask God to show you how to allow that knowledge to change the way you think and live.
- Form a plan to regularly read God’s Word this week so you can grow “in knowledge and depth of insight” and “discern what is best.”
- If you tend to work alone, consider how the mission of God is realized through a team of people. Ask God to show you who you might be able to team up with to carry out the mission.
- Reconnect with a friend you haven’t spoken to in a while. Catch up and thank God for how this person has impacted your life.

# A Life Worthy of the Gospel

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## Philippians 1:12–30

### ► Start It Out

Divide your group into smaller groups of three. Tell your groups that they are to write a three-point handbook on Christian behavior. They need to come up with three chapter titles for the handbook. Give them about 5–10 minutes. Then, have a spokesperson from each group share their chapter titles with the whole group. Give explanations if necessary.

### ► Talk It Out

- What was Paul's connection to the palace guard?
- How did Paul's imprisonment actually help to further the gospel?
- When has God allowed a bad situation in your life to actually bring about good?
- Summarize what Paul is saying in verses 15–18.
- We focus a lot on having the right motives, but what does Paul say in verses 15–18?
- What does Paul mean in verse 21?
- How can it be a gain if we die?
- When you think of what Christians will experience in heaven, it makes sense that Paul wants to leave this life. So what's keeping us here?
- Why does Paul say he should stay here for a while longer (rather than go to be with Christ)?
- What does it look like to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? What does that mean?

- What other Scripture passages show you what it looks like to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ?
- What kind of suffering did these early Christians face? What kind of suffering do Christians today face? What about American Christians?
- How can suffering bring us closer to Christ?

## ► Live It Out

- Identify a difficult situation in your life right now that seems totally negative. Give the situation to God, asking him to use it for good.
- Get more comfortable with death. Pray that God will give you confidence to live and to die for him. Pray that God will open your eyes to the treasures both of living and of dying.
- Take an audit of your life. Are you living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? In what areas are you doing well? In what areas do you need to do some work?
- Read several passages in the Bible that discuss living a life worthy of Christ. Write down your findings. What does it look like to live for Christ?
- If you're suffering right now with something, praise God for this opportunity to grow closer to him. Ask him to give you perspective in the midst of suffering.
- Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who suffer for their faith.
- Support—financially, prayerfully, or through encouraging letters—a missionary to an area that is hostile to Christianity.



## CHAPTER TWO

# Have the Mindset of Christ

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## Philippians 2:1–11

### ► Start It Out

Is it more difficult to talk about your successes or your failures? Why? Is it more difficult to talk about your strengths or your weaknesses? Why?

### ► Talk It Out

- Do you think Paul is genuinely asking whether the Philippians have any encouragement, comfort, tenderness, and compassion (v. 1)? Why or why not?
- Why do you think being like-minded, having the same love, and being one in spirit would make Paul's joy complete?
- What does it mean to be like-minded, having the same love, and being one in spirit?
- Is it possible for believers to disagree and still be like-minded and one in spirit? Why or why not?

- Why does Paul give the instructions in verses 3–4 in this passage about being like-minded?
- What is the reason Paul gives for humbling ourselves and seeing others as above us?
- According to this passage, what was the mindset of Christ?
- How does the idea of a humble Christ match your ideas of God?
- What does it mean that Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage?
- How can we have the mindset of Christ?
- What does it look like to humble ourselves in our relationships today?
- Is it wise to humble ourselves today? Is humility valued today?
- When is it easier to humble ourselves? When is it more difficult?
- Why is it difficult to humble ourselves?

### ► Live It Out

- Confess any competition you have felt with other Christians. Ask God to help you to be like-minded.
- Think through a broken relationship with a Christian. Ask God to show you how to forgive this person, how to reconcile, and how to be like-minded even if you disagree.
- Decide how you will go about apologizing to and reconciling with another Christian. What steps will you take? When?
- Express to God that you have not always been humble, seeing others as higher than yourself. Ask God to give you the correct perspective on yourself.
- Pray about ways you can show more humility in your day-to-day routine. Ask God to show you any areas where there needs to be more humility.

# Do Everything Without Grumbling

## Philippians 2:12–30

### ► Start It Out

Bring in recent local newspapers. Ask group members to look through the papers. Afterward, have group members talk about how reading the news makes them feel: hopeful, discouraged, sad, hopeless, excited, etc. Ask group members to identify the stories or headlines that made them feel that way. Which stories or headlines highlight the negative side of human nature? Which ones highlight positive things people are doing? Which stories—negative or positive—get more coverage?

### ► Talk It Out

- What does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?
- What is the proper way to approach God? With fear? As a buddy? As an untouchable God?
- Who is the one who does the work in us? How well is that reflected in your life?
- What's God's role in transforming and growing us? What's our role?
- Why is it important to not grumble and argue?
- Why was it especially important for the early believers to not grumble and argue?
- What does it mean to be children of God? Why is this significant to include in this passage?
- When have you felt you were among a warped and crooked generation?
- When do you feel discouraged about being the only one “shining” in your world?

- What other Scripture passages talk about light, shining, or lamps? How do they relate to this passage?
- What does it look like to shine among our generation?
- How does Galatians 6:9–10 align with verses 14–16?
- Paul is rejoicing in suffering. How often do you rejoice when suffering or hardship comes your way?
- Who is Timothy? Who is Epaphroditus?
- What is Paul's relationship with Timothy?
- Who in your life has been there for you through thick and thin—like Timothy was there for Paul?
- Who have you been able to mentor and invest in like Paul did with Timothy? Who has invested in you?
- Who has been a co-worker to you in ministry? How have you served together?
- What qualities make Epaphroditus so special to Paul?
- Who gets the credit for healing Epaphroditus? Who/what do you normally give credit to when things are going well? Why?

### ► Live It Out

- Explore spiritual disciplines such as journaling, fasting, and Scripture meditation this week. Find how and when you're best able to meet God and allow him to work in you. Think outside the box, too, and consider meeting God through exercise, sharing a meal with friends, and writing encouraging letters.
- If you depend on your own strength to grow and transform, confess this to God. Ask him to show you the right balance between opening yourself to his work and depending on him to do the work.
- Banish discouragement from your week. Place encouraging verses urging you to “keep on” around your home or office. Consider Philippians 2:14–16 and Galatians 6:9 for a start.



- Thank God for the people who have invested in you over the years. Ask God to show you who you can invest in.
- Keep a journal of blessings and things you're grateful for. At the end of each day, thank God for working in your life to allow these blessings. Give God the credit.



## CHAPTER THREE

# No Confidence in the Flesh

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### Philippians 3:1–14

#### ► Start It Out

Pass out paper and markers. Ask each person to create a picture or chart to illustrate his or her spiritual journey. Group members should focus on the key events or situations that shaped them spiritually. When finished, allow group members to share their pictures or charts with the whole group, or split into smaller groups of three or four for sharing.

#### ► Talk It Out

- Why is Paul writing about circumcision? What debate was happening at the time?
- Compare verses 2–4 to Romans 2:25–29 and Ephesians 2:11–13. What was the debate about circumcision? What is Paul's answer to this debate?
- The debate about circumcision seems to center on whether God cares more about internal transformation or physical signs. Which do we tend to prize more? Why?

- Why does Paul mention all of these things in verses 4–6? Is he bragging?
- Compare the list in verses 4–6 to 2 Corinthians 11:22–33. What kinds of things has Paul been through?
- What does it mean to consider everything a loss that he may gain Christ?
- What did you lose when you started following Christ? What did you gain?
- What might these early Christians have lost when they started following Christ?
- Paul was depending on God to make him righteous. What does someone's life look like if they're depending on themselves to become righteous?
- What does it mean that Paul wants to know Christ by participating in his sufferings and becoming like him in his death?
- How often do you consider knowing Christ through suffering? How do we tend to get to know Christ better?
- Why is it important that Paul clarifies that he has not yet reached the goal? Why is it dangerous to think that we've "arrived" in our Christian faith?
- How does Paul's advice to forget what's behind and strain toward what is ahead hit you? Do you think it's good advice? Why or why not?
- What is the goal that we're pressing on toward?
- Does pressing on require that we be perfect? Why or why not?

### ► Live It Out

- God cares about the transformation happening within us and then being expressed in our words and actions. Make a list of situations, events, or choices over the past six months that show God is transforming you from the inside out. Thank God for working in and through you.
- Think through what you've lost as a result of following Christ. Then write down all the things you've gained by following him. Praise God for the ways he is blessing you.
- Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who lose a lot more than we do when they choose to follow Christ. Pray that they might know peace and be able to speak the words of Paul: "I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."

- Repent of the idea that you've "arrived" spiritually. Ask God to show you the areas in which you need to grow. Then form a plan for opening that area of your life to God this week.

# Following Paul's Example

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## Philippians 3:15–21

### ► Start It Out

Ahead of time, get a 50–100 piece puzzle. Reserving three pieces, divide up the remaining pieces into three different envelopes. To start the activity, divide the group into three subgroups, handing each group an envelope of puzzle pieces. Tell the groups to put together the puzzle using their pieces. After the groups have tried for two or three minutes to put together the puzzle using only their pieces, tell the group they'll need to share their pieces in order to put the puzzle together. After two or three minutes, provide the box cover or a picture of the completed puzzle. After two or three minutes more, give the group the reserved three pieces. After the puzzle is completed, use these debriefing questions:

- How did you feel while you were trying to complete the puzzle?
- What prevented you from completing the puzzle until the very end?
- How did a lack of understanding (that you needed to share, that you didn't have the full picture, that you didn't know there were pieces missing) allow you to make progress but not complete the puzzle?
- How does your Christian walk change as you gain new understanding over time?
- Can you give an example of how your Christian walk changed with new understanding?

- How can mature Christ-followers support new Christians as they begin to figure out what the Christian walk looks like?
- Should mature Christ-followers simply tell new believers what to do? Or should new believers be left to figure it out on their own as others have? Why?

### ► **Talk It Out**

- What view should mature Christians take? (Hint: Look back at the rest of the chapter.)
- What are some ways God has made things clear to you? How does he impart wisdom?
- When has God changed your mind about something?
- What does it mean to live up to what we have already attained?
- Are new Christians and mature Christians held to different standards? Why or why not?
- Why does Paul tell them to follow him as a model? Why not just follow Christ's example?
- Who have you looked to as a model for how to live the Christian life? Why did you look to that person?
- Is it ever dangerous to look to others as models for living the Christian life? When?
- Paul is tearful thinking of the enemies of Christ. Have you ever experienced strong emotions at the thought of those who are lost or actively against God? When?
- Paul says many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Do you think this is still true today? Why or why not?
- What makes someone an enemy of the cross of Christ? How did Paul describe it? How would you describe it?
- What does it mean that we are citizens of heaven?
- What does it look like to eagerly await Christ's return? For instance, how might we spend our time if we were eagerly waiting?

- What hope do you find in verses 20–21? Why does it bring you hope?
- What do you think it means that our bodies will be transformed?

### ► Live It Out

- Think through an area of stubbornness in your life. Open that area up to God to examine. Allow him to either strengthen you in your conviction or change your mind.
- Choose to show extra grace to a new believer in your life who is still working out how to live as a Christ-follower. Pray for this new believer and praise God for this new life.
- Examine the people you look to as models of the Christian walk. How has their example helped you? How might you be placing them on an unfair pedestal?
- Praise God for the Christlike women and men in your life who have served as models. Write one person a note thanking them for being a great model.
- When you feel out of place in this world, remind yourself that your citizenship lies elsewhere.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Closing Appeals

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### Philippians 4:1–9

#### ► Start It Out

When has positive thinking brought about good results in your life? Does positive thinking always have that effect? Why or why not?

#### ► Talk It Out

- What does Paul mean that the Philippians are his joy and crown?
- Who are Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement? Why are they mentioned here?
- Why is it so important that Euodia and Syntyche are of the same mind?
- Who is Paul referring to as his true companion?
- What is the book of life? Why does Paul mention it here?
- What does it mean to rejoice? How can we rejoice always?
- Why is rejoicing always important for Christ-followers?
- Why might Paul have chosen the word gentleness? Why is gentleness key?

- What's so important about not being anxious?
- When have you been worrying about something, given it to God, and felt a weight lifted off your shoulders? Why not take advantage of this more often?
- When do you pray about the situations in your life? Do you pray often, or only when things get bad?
- Some people feel they're being selfish when they pray for themselves. What might Paul say to that fear?
- What does it mean that the peace of God transcends all understanding?
- Why would Paul spend so much time explaining the kinds of things we should think about? Why are our thoughts so important?
- What happens when we think about things that don't make this list? How does it affect us?
- Why does Paul tell the Philippians to put everything he's taught them into practice? Why not tell them to read their Bibles and put everything they read into practice?
- Paul ends his letter by grouping together this practical advice on rejoicing, being gentle, praying, and thinking of good things. Why do you think he ends with these? Why might they have made the cut?

### ► Live It Out

- Identify someone in your church or group with whom you are not like-minded. Pray about how you might reconcile this relationship.
- Begin a blessings journal, each day writing down several things you are grateful for. When life throws you a curveball, look back at your journal and choose to rejoice.
- Ask God to show you how to grow in gentleness. Pray that he will show you when and where you are less than gentle and how you can be more gentle in the future.
- Whenever you feel anxious, pray this quick prayer: "I give this worry to you, God, and ask for your peace." After a week, reflect on your level of anxiety.



- Learn to release control of your worries to God. Look up several passages about God's love, strength, power, and wisdom. Rest in the knowledge that God is big enough, powerful enough, and wise enough to deal with your problems.
- Spend one week taking stock of your thought life. What are the thoughts that flood your mind on a day-to-day basis? If you notice any negative patterns, replace them with thoughts of God's love.
- Fill your mind with positive thoughts by starting your day with a song. Sing or hum your favorite hymn or worship song in the shower each day.

# A Final Thanks

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## Philippians 4:10–23

### ► Start It Out

If you were given \$500,000, how would you use the money? How much would you keep? How much would you spend? How much would you give away? Why?

### ► Talk It Out

- What does it look like to be content in all circumstances? What examples have you seen?
- Studies have shown that regardless of how much people earn, they all think that earning 25 percent more would make them happier. Does this resonate with you? What does this say about our contentment?
- Can you think of anyone who is content with less so he or she can help others in need? What examples come to mind?
- When have you heard verse 13 quoted? How have you heard people use it?

- What is verse 13 referring to? Can we really do anything through his strength? Are there any exceptions?
- When we're following Christ, what kinds of things might we do that require us to lean on God's strength to bring us through?
- Summarize in your own words what Paul is saying about the Philippians in verses 14–20.
- How did Paul and other missionaries at this time pay for their travels around the world?
- Why is it important that Paul has financial support while he is in house arrest?
- Paul is saying that the Philippians continually supported him. They were ongoing supporters, not just one-time givers. Would you rather have ongoing supporters in life or one-time givers?
- How might the Philippians have benefited from supporting Paul?
- What does it mean that God will meet all our needs according to the riches of Jesus?
- When have you felt that God didn't meet your (or someone else's) needs? Can verse 19 be true?
- Why is it important that Paul included verse 20? What does this say about his perspective?
- What is significant about Paul saying that the brothers and sisters with him, especially those in Caesar's household, send their greetings?
- Why do you think Paul ends the letter this way?

### ► Live It Out

- Confess your discontentment to God. Ask him to show you how wealthy you really are.
- Start a shopping fast for one month. Limit yourself to purchasing only groceries for one month and spend that time growing closer to God. See what discontentment bubbles up during that time.
- Intentionally live on a little less each month and give away the extra to people or projects in your community.

- Pray that God will align your heart with his so you can distinguish your needs from your wants.
- Pray that God will align your heart with his so you can understand what he wants you to do with your life.
- Choose to take that step of faith you've been putting off. Lean into God's strength.
- Support a missionary—financially, prayerfully, or otherwise—as a group. Connect with the missionary regularly to find out his or her needs.
- Financially support a mission that uses missionaries local to the region. Adopt a child through Compassion International, support a church, or fund a specific project.