



User Friendly Guide to

Philippians

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Christian Support for Students & Staff

7. The secret of being content (Phil 4:10-23)

Key verse

"To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (4:20)

Way In

Have you ever noticed what happens when you want something very badly, and then you get it? *A new part-time job? A boyfriend/girlfriend? An important qualification? A pay rise?* You begin by longing for it and then when you get it, how do you feel and why do you feel that way?

Study Questions

1. How was Paul able to say *"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances"* (4:11), according to 4:13 (4:7-9; 1:21; 3:10-11)?
2. Describe how generous the Philippian Christians were to the imprisoned Paul (4:14-18). What does this tell you about the attitude of the Philippian Christians (2:5)?
3. Remember that Paul (in prison in Rome) has been instructing the Philippians to hold out the word of life. What is so encouraging about 4:22?
4. What reminders does Paul give us at the end of his letter about what really matters in life (4:20-23)?

Application Questions

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being fully content), how content are you with life at the moment? What makes you discontent with your life?
2. Listen to this reminder of some of the key lessons of the book of Philippians: God always finishes what he starts; contend for the gospel; look to the interests of others; show that you are saved by the way that you live; remember that only Jesus can make you righteous; set your heart on heaven; rejoice in the Lord; be content in all circumstances; do all of these things so that God is honoured as God!

Prayer

Pray that you learn to be content in Jesus, whatever your circumstances. Pray that your contentment in Christ will provoke questions from your non-Christian friends. Praise God that he is at work in your life for your good and His glory; He will finish what He has started in you!

Glossary

"I can do everything" (4:13) – refers to being content in Christ whatever the circumstances.

User friendly guide to Philippians

Welcome to the adventure that is reading the letter to the Philippians.

Whether you are reading it for the first time or as a revisit you can be sure that you and your group will gain riches out of its treasure store. For although this is a letter written in the 1st century AD by Paul to the church in Philippi it is also very much the living word of God. God's word is for us and is meant to achieve a purpose in our lives (check Isaiah 55 v 11 and Hebrews 5 v 12).

This guide is written especially for CU groups that

- Want not just to read God's word but live it.
- Want to get stuck into Philippians from start to finish.
- Want to make a difference to their college or sixth form.
- Have only an hour or less for their meeting, which is normally at lunch time.
- Have few people able to lead the study so need ready to use material.

Some tips

1. There are 7 topics in this guide with the theme of living an authentic Christian life.
 - Being a true disciple of Jesus in College, Philippians 1:1-26.
 - How to be a united, single-minded CU, Philippians 1:27-2:11.
 - Living revolutionary lives in College, Philippians 2:12-30.
 - Is being 'good', good enough? Philippians 3:1-9.
 - How can we live life full of joy? Philippians 4:2-9.
 - The secret of being content, Philippians 4:10-23.
2. The Bible version used in the guide is the NIV.
3. You should not need to adapt this at all because it has been tried and tested in CUs. However, that doesn't mean you don't need someone in the group to take the initiative and read it over beforehand and lead the time you spend together. You may decide that it would be great if everyone had a copy of the studies – they are easy to download www.festive.org.uk
4. Remember – hearing God speak through His word is exciting, so take time to acknowledge His presence and ask for His help (generally called prayer).
5. The Crossway Bible Guide to Philippians by Ian Coffey is good if you are looking for some help. You should be able to get one at a local Christian Bookshop, from a church leader or online from www.ivpbooks.com
6. If you want any assistance at all please e-mail info@festive.org.uk

Philippians: Living an authentic Christian life

1. Being a true disciple of Jesus in college (Phil 1:1-26)

Key Verse

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21).

Way In

Share with each other what has been/or what is your greatest ambition in life.

Study Questions

1. What can you discover about Paul's situation and his concerns?
2. What is Paul's greatest ambition (1:7, 12-14, 16, 18) and why is this the case (1:20-21)?
3. How does Paul encourage the Philippian Christians to continue to live to know and honour Jesus (1:3-6, 9-14, 23-26)?

Application Questions

1. How does it make you feel to know that God is going to complete the work which He has started in you (1:6)?
2. Paul prays that the Philippians lives may be filled with the "fruit of righteousness" (1:11). Does your lifestyle make it easy or difficult for your friends to be attracted to believing in Jesus?
3. From what God is saying in Philippians 1, what should the greatest aim and ambition be for your lives and CU? Is this your aim?

Prayer

Pray for each other along the lines of 1:3-6 and 1:9-11. Re-read these passages now.

Glossary

Saints (1:1) – God's people; all Christians are called "saints".

The day of Christ (1:6) – When Jesus returns.

6. How can we live life full of joy (Phil 4:2-9)?

Key Verse

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (4:4)

Way In

On a typical day, what things tend to preoccupy your mind (think about your conversations with people, what you think about when you daydream!)? Why?

Study Questions

1. Euodia and Syntyche's (both were Christians) relationship had broken down.
 - a.) How do you usually react when people fall out with each other (e.g. *try to resolve situation, gossip, ignore it...*)?
 - b.) What should happen according to 4:2-3 and 2:3-5?
2. Paul has talked a lot about the Christian life being one of suffering in the here and now, yet he constantly tells the Philippians to rejoice (14, 18:2:2, 17,18). What are they to rejoice in and why (4:4-5)?
3. It is easy to become anxious. Reflect on Paul's words in 4:6-7 and talk about any encouragements you draw from these words.
4. Write down the opposite of all the descriptive words Paul uses in 4:8.
 - a.) If you were to spend you time thinking about such things, what effect would it have on you?
 - b.) If you were to spend you time thinking about the things Paul describes in 4:8, what effect would it have on you?
5. What is the sure result of praying and purifying our minds (4:7b, 9b)?

Application Questions

1. Do you think that the level of anxiety in your life, is matched by how much or how little time you spend talking to God in grateful prayer?
2. How careful are you about what you put into your mind?
3. What will you do to help to keep your mind focused on anything that is "excellent or praiseworthy"?

Prayer

Get everyone in the group to share one thing that they are thankful to God for an done thing that they need to commit to God in prayer. Pray for one another and rejoice in the Lord Jesus!

Glossary

"The Lord is near" (2:5) – He is with us by His Spirit and Jesus' return is also near!

"Think about such things" (2:8b) – Take time to think about...

5. How can we be mature Christians? (Phil 3:10-4:1)

Key Verse

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3:20)

Way In

If you had the option of being like anyone in the world for a day, who would it be and why?

Study Questions

1. What does a mature Christian life look like according to 3:10-15?
2. What will help Christians to become mature (3:17)?
3. What things can distract us from becoming mature (3:13, 18-19)?
4. What will help Christians to keep focused on maturing in their knowledge & love of Jesus (3:20-4:1)?

Application Questions

1. Are there mature Christians in your church who you aim to be like? Explain why you want to be like them.
2. Why do we rarely think of ourselves as being citizens of heaven?

Prayer

Praise God for the mature Christian in your life, who have taught you what it means to know and love Jesus. Pray that God would enable you to view all of life in the light of the fact that Jesus will return.

Glossary

"earthly things" – this does not necessarily refer to bad things, but anything that distracts us from living to know and honour Jesus as Lord.

2. How to be a united, single-minded CU (Phil 1:27-2:11)

Key Verse

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (2:5)

Way In

Read out or explain a true story of how Christians in another part of the world have been persecuted for being followers of Jesus. Share any ways in which you recall being treated badly because of the stand you have made for Jesus.

Study Questions

1. Suffering because we follow Jesus is to be expected as Christians (1:29).
 - a.) When suffering comes, how are Christians to respond *"in a manner worthy of the gospel"* (see 1:27 and 2:12)?
 - b.) Why is it so important to stand together (1:28)?
2. What is the key that enables Christians to stand together and be united (2:2)?
3.
 - a.) Describe who Jesus is from the description in 2:6-11.
 - b.) What does Jesus' incredible attitude urge us to do in: 2:3-4; 2:6-7; and 2:7-8?
4. How do 2:9-11 help Christians to deal with the suffering that comes from following Jesus?

Application

1. What will it mean in practice to consider others better than yourself in CU?
2. If each person's attitude in the CU is the same as Jesus', how do you think:
 - a.) This would help you to cope when suffering comes your way because you are a Christian?
 - b.) Your non-Christian friends would react when they see your lifestyle?

Prayer

Pray for persecuted Christians around the world to be united in their devotion to Jesus and one another. Pray for your CU to grasp how amazing Jesus is and praise Him for who He is and what He has done (re-read 2:6-11)!

Glossary

Gospel (1:27) – the good news that Jesus is King and Saviour.

Worthy of the gospel (1:27) – living lives that match up to being followers of Jesus.

Every knee should bow (2:10) – this does not mean that everyone will one day trust Jesus. Isaiah 45:22-25, makes it clear that everyone will bow the knee, either willingly or unwillingly.

3. Living revolutionary lives in college (Phil 2:12-30)

Key Verse

“...a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (2:15)

Way In

If you were asked to describe the kind of world we live in, in three words, what would you say?

Study Questions

1. Because Jesus Christ is Lord (every knee will bow to Him!) what does Paul urge the Philippians to do 2:12-13? What do you think this means?
2. What does the picture of Christians “*shining like stars in the universe*” (2:15) suggest about the world in which we live? What evidence is there of this?
3. How do Christians shine like stars wherever they are? See also Dan 12:2-3.
4. In what ways are Timothy and Epaphroditus pictures of shining like stars and living life like Jesus did (remember last week’s description 2:6-11)?

Application

1. As you reflect back on your life, in what ways are you aware of God transforming you or other Christians you know?
2. How much do you really stand out from others who are not “*the children of God*” (2:14)? If you don’t stand out, think about why. If you do stand out, is it for the right reasons (because your lifestyle is “*blameless and pure*” and because you are “*holding out the word of life*”)?

Prayer

Thank God for the salvation he has given you & pray that the knowledge of it would change your heart, mind and actions. Pray that you may shine like stars in your college and in the universe as you hold out the word of life. Pray that as you do this, your friends will come to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and that this will bring glory to God the Father.

Glossary

“**work out your salvation**” (2:12) – note that it says “*work out*” not “*work for*” your salvation because Jesus has already made us right with God. Paul is talking about us applying the good news about Jesus to every area of our lives.

“**shine like stars**” (2:15) – not just about living a clear Christian life, but also about speaking out the gospel to people (see Dan 12:3).

4. Is being “good”, good enough? (Phil 3:1-9)

Key verse

“I consider everything loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things...” (3:8)

Way In

Have you ever come across someone who has said: “*I’ve lived a pretty good life, I’m not as bad as...so I think God will let me into heaven*”? How did you, or how would you respond?

Study Questions

1. In 3:1-2, Paul is warning the Philippians against those who taught that what makes you right with God, is Jesus plus a physical *mark* on your body (circumcision). What things does Paul say actually *mark* out a true Christian (3:3)? What do they mean (see glossary if needed)?
2. Paul lists a whole load of credentials that make him stand out as better than others (3:5-6).
 - a.) What do people today think will make them right with God?
 - b.) Why do people want to rely on themselves, rather than Jesus alone?
3. Why do you think Paul is listing all of these things in 3:5-7 (hint, it’s not to show off!)?
4. What is Paul so keen for Christians to believe and know (3:7-9)?

Application Questions

1. What things can we as Christians be tempted to rely on in addition to Jesus’ work on the cross? What does this reveal about your view of yourself and your view of Jesus?
2. If God were to say to you right now, “*Why should I let you into heaven?*” what would you say?
3. How would you explain 3:9 to your non-Christian friends who think they are already good enough?

Prayer

Ask God that as Christians you would truly grasp that you are made right with God by faith in Christ alone. Pray that God would enable you to give true and helpful answers to your friends who think they are good enough for God.

Glossary

“**we who are the circumcision**” (3:3) – a Christian’s heart is changed by the Holy Spirit (Rom 2:28-29)

“**worship by the Spirit of God**” (3:3) – the whole of a Christian’s life is directed by the Holy Spirit

“**glory in Christ Jesus**” (3:3) – full of joy because of who Jesus is & what he has done

“**put no confidence in the flesh**” (3:3) – not depending on anything we have done to make us right with God

