

**Unified | Week 2**  
**Small Group Discussion Guide**

## Background

### Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Christians in the city of Philippi around 61AD while he was in prison in Rome (1:12–18, 4:22).<sup>1</sup>

### Background and Setting

Originally known as Krenides (*The Little Fountains*) because of the numerous nearby springs, Philippi (*city of Philip*) received its name from Philip II of Macedonia—the father of Alexander the Great. Attracted by the nearby gold mines, Philip conquered the region during the 4th century B.C.<sup>2</sup>

Being a Roman colony was a great source of pride for the Philippians, who adopted Roman customs for themselves. “Paul’s description of Christians as citizens of heaven (3:20) was appropriate, since the Philippians prided themselves on being citizens of Rome (c.f. Acts 16:21).”<sup>3</sup>

In the book of Acts, Luke tells us he and Paul visited Philippi and described it as “a Roman colony and a leading city of the district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12). Luke says he and Paul stayed there “for several days” (Acts 16:12) and eventually planted the church there (Acts 16:12–40).

Some key events during this time were:

- Lydia’s conversion (Acts 16:14–15)
- Paul and Silas were in-prisoned (Acts 16:16–24).
- Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from prison (Acts 16:25–30)
- Paul and Silas lead their prison guard and his whole family to saving faith (Acts 16:29–34).

### Major Themes in Philippians

- **Chapter 1:** Paul primarily deals with the subjects of **hope** and **identity**, calling the believers in Philippi to remember what Christ has done for them and to live in a way that honors His name.
- **Chapter 2:** Paul exhorts the believers to live a life of **humility**. He reminds them of Jesus’ life and how it modeled humility in the most beautiful and perfect ways. He then gives them practical instruction for how to follow Jesus in a life of humility.
- **Chapter 3:** Paul reminds the believers why their only source of **boasting** before God is Christ and Christ alone. He lists his religious resume and declares that it means nothing in terms of his righteousness before God. The same is true for us today. If we call ourselves by the name of Christ, then we should live a life that demonstrates Him as our only source of righteousness.
- **Chapter 4:** To conclude his letter, Paul gives some very practical instruction for how the believers ought to approach such matters as **endurance**, **worry**, **prayer**, and **thinking**. He concludes by declaring that God will supply all of their needs if they will be a people who proactively center their lives on Him in these specific areas of life.

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<sup>1</sup>John MacArthur, *The John MacArthur Whole Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1709.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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**Main Point: Collective Humility Fuels Collective Unity**

## Main Reading

### Philippians 2:1–16 CSB

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, **2** make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. **4** Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

**5** Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, **6** who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. **7** Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, **8** he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross. **9** For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—**11** and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**12** Therefore, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, so now, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13** For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose. **14** Do everything without grumbling and arguing, **15** so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, **16** by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.

### Optional Extra Reading:

- Proverbs 16:18–19
- Isaiah 66:2
- Mark 10:35–45

## Discussion Questions

1. In general, what stands out to you in these verses? Why that specifically?
2. Look at verses 3 & 4. Have you ever known someone like this? What specifically did they do that stood out?
3. As you read v. 5–11, what stands out to you? How should our hearts respond to this?
4. What thoughts or emotions do you have as you read v.12–13?
  - Does it seem like Paul is telling us that we must work for our salvation?
  - What do you think he means by “with fear and trembling” ?
  - Have you ever experienced “God...working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose?” What was that like specifically?
5. Out of every command we've read, which one would be the greatest challenge for you?
  - Could you commit that verse to memory this week and make it your daily prayer?
  - Next week: how would y'all feel about sharing your verses from memory and also sharing if God challenged you in this area?