

Unified | Week 4
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).¹

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.²

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).”³

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.

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

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

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Main Point: Faithful Endurance fuels Collective Unity

Main Reading

Philippians 4:1, 4–9, 12–13, 19 CSB

So then, my dearly loved and longed for brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, in this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends...**4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **6** Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. **9** Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

12 I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. **13** I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

19 And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Optional Extra Reading:

- Matthew 6:25–34
- Matthew 14:22–33
- John 15:1–25

Discussion Questions

1. In general, what stands out to you in these verses? Why that specifically?
2. In light of Paul's command to "Rejoice in the Lord", would you say have experienced this over the past year? How so?
 - If not, why do you think that is?
 - What have been some of your obstacles to rejoicing in the Lord?
3. As you read v.6–7, why do you think this is so important for Christians to practice?
 - What are some personal worries that tend to overwhelm you?
 - What keeps you from "presen[ing] your requests to God" and experiencing "the peace of God" in these moments of worry?
4. What did you think about Josh's point regarding social media and technology?
 - Is this something you personally struggle with?
 - What are some practical steps you can take this week to fill your mind with truth?
5. How can we as a group support one another in pursuing obedience to these instructions?