

Philippians

DEVOTIONAL & READING PLAN

Message from

PASTOR JESSE

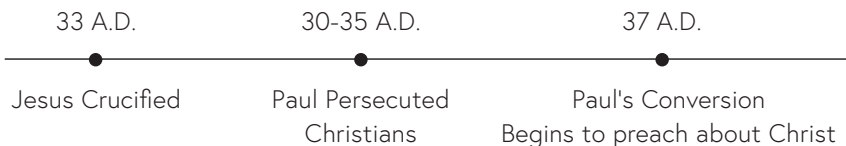
I'm so grateful that you would join us in reading through the book of Philippians in this 28-day reading plan. Creating a daily habit of reading God's word is one of the best habits you can ever form in your life. It will strengthen and encourage you in every other part of your life. This year as a church we are focusing on biblical literacy and we're taking a look at one of my favorite books of the Bible, written by the Apostle Paul while he was in a Roman prison. It's amazing to see how encouraging Paul could be while he was in such dire circumstances. He wrote to the church in Philippi with the intention of encouraging the local church and urging them to persevere and keep their eyes fixed on Christ through any obstacle set before them.

Each Sunday of this series, I'll share some key points from this book, but I'd also encourage each of you to do the reading on your own Monday thru Friday. Set aside some time each day to pray and to read the daily Bible passage or verse, then read the following short devotional we put together as a team. Lastly, take some time to write down your thoughts with each days application question. Each daily reading should only take you 10-15 minutes, so it's something that even the busiest of us can and should carve out time to do. For each week of the reading plan, Saturday is set aside to review key verses and answer questions. There are areas to take message notes each Sunday and also a weekly memory verse for you to hold onto over the following week. Long after the 28 days of this series is over, you will have four verses memorized and ready to declare over your life in every season. Remember, what you'll get out of this reading plan is what you're willing to put into it...so let's get started by taking a look at the historical context of Philippians.

Philippians

NEW TESTAMENT BOOK

The book of Philippians is better described as a letter, written by the Apostle Paul, with the help of Timothy in approximately 61 A.D. while Paul was under house arrest in Rome, as depicted in Acts 28. The letter was written to the Church of Phillipi - which was a leading city and Roman colony within that district of Macedonia. The Church of Phillipi was also the first Christian church founded in what is now modern-day Europe. The church was founded as a response to a vision Paul had in Act 16:9. In the vision, Paul saw a man from Macedonia begging him and saying, "come over to Macedonia and help us." This letter was later written as a response to some reports Paul had received over issues and needs within that particular church. The themes of joy and unity found in Christ run throughout the book. Jesus is mentioned over 40 times in just these four chapters. Paul must have sensed that what the church of Phillipi needed most was not to be scolded or rebuked, but to be encouraged and strengthened because of the division and persecution happening all around them. It was in the very city of Phillipi that Paul and Silas had sung hymns of praise to God after they had been beaten and thrown into jail. At midnight, the earth shook and their chains were broken. While writing this letter, Paul would have remembered his experience and held gratitude in his heart. Philippians is a letter of love and hope, with joy and spirit-filled wisdom. It is a valuable book to read, study, and meditate on.



THE EARLY CHURCH

The map below shows where each of Paul's letter's to the Church were delivered.



47-57 A.D.

Three Missionary
Journeys

57 A.D.

Arrested in
Jerusalem

61 A.D.

Philippians letter
written

...being confident of this, that he
who began a good work in you
will carry it on to completion
until the day of Christ Jesus.

BIBLE READING

Phil 1:1-6 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

DEVOTIONAL

Find comfort and rest in God's power and sovereignty. God "Himself" created you and started an amazing work in you. And what God starts, we can be confident He will finish. Your life has a purpose to fulfill. Life might not be happening the way you expected. Circumstances might not be what you envisioned when you pictured your life years ago. You may have had a particular plan with timelines, goals and checkpoints all plotted out along the way, and it's just not working out like you envisioned. That's okay, because God's plans are always better than our best laid plans. We need to trust Him in the process and know that God has a plan for us far better than anything we could ever even dream. God is working, even when you don't see Him or feel Him. He will complete what He began in you if you are willing. He will equip you for the task and see you through until you are with Him in eternity. Your only job for this age is to abide in Him and leave the results in His hands. The same hands that crafted the evening sunsets and budding flowers are also at work in your life. Don't become frustrated when the trials and tests of life are not turning out as you had expected. Keep your eyes fixed on God and trust his process. God is still working out something amazing in you and He is not done with you yet!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What good work do you think God is working out within you?

BIBLE READING

Phil 1:7-11 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

DEVOTIONAL

The key phrase in this passage might not seem like it's that important at first glance. It's found right at the beginning of verse 10 and says "so that". Yep...that's it. I know what you're thinking, how is "so that" a key phrase? The important thing about these two simple words is that they indicate purpose and intentionality. There is a reason for whatever came before, so that whatever comes after can be accomplished. This is the God we serve, he equips us so that we will walk in the way he commands. God desires for each of us to abound in love, in knowledge and insight in an increasing way, so that we will be equipped to discern and know what is best according to his word. God desires for each of us to be pure and blameless before Christ, and he gives us, through his word, the opportunity to daily grow in faith, love and wisdom in order for this to become a reality. God doesn't ask us to do anything that is impossible. He asks us to do that which has become possible...through Him. This is very good news!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What spiritual equipping is happening in your life right now?

BIBLE READING

Phil 1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever had a conversation with someone and just from the sound of their voice and body language you thought they were going to share some bad news? What if they shared good news instead? You would be surprised I'm sure. Everything about the situation seemed bad, but at the very end, you learned something great had happened after all. We see trials and troubles in our lives and in the lives of those around us and we think there is no possible way that this could work out for good, but somehow God uses that circumstance for his glory. The death of a loved one, losing your job, a car crash or a negative health report. God can even use the most painful and challenging moments to draw us closer to Him.. This happened with Paul; he was beaten, tortured, jailed, blinded and shipwrecked, but each time God used the negative circumstances in Paul's life to expand the kingdom of God. The only variable in these situations was Paul himself. Paul came to realize and see the world around him through the lens of heaven, and we too can see life like this as well. Instead of panic, we have peace, instead of worry, we turn to worship, and instead of chaos, we choose to fix our eyes on Christ.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

How has God used a negative circumstance in your life for good?

BIBLE READING

Phil 1:15-18 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

DEVOTIONAL

Not only does God use difficult circumstances to bring people to himself, He also uses people who are not right with him to accomplish the very same thing. I know this doesn't sit well with many legalistic or religiously minded Christians. We think it is our role to call out and judge and label someone a heretic or a false teacher. But we need to be careful with this. This same self-righteous mindset was prevalent in Paul's time as well and he confronts it directly. "But what does it matter?" Paul says. That statement alone has put me back in my place a number of times when I've found myself judging a person's motives in whether they are pure or selfish when preaching Christ. The important issue isn't their motives but what they are preaching. If they had been preaching a false gospel, Paul would have taken issue with them, but that wasn't the case. At the end of the day, Paul rejoiced. He rejoiced that the gospel was being preached; whether it was by him or someone else, it didn't matter. All that mattered was that Christ was preached. This is a hard but important lesson for all of us to learn. We must be united as we share Christ with the world and cheer each other on, not worrying about who is getting credit. In the end, our names will not matter, knees will only bow down to one name...the name of Jesus.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What good work do you think God is working out within you?

BIBLE READING

Phil 1:19-30 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. 27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

DEVOTIONAL

To live is Christ, and to die is gain. Do you think that's true? Does your life reflect that you believe it to be true? And if it is true, what do we have to lose as Christians? Nothing in this world matters except what we are doing to point others to Christ. This world is not our home. This life is not our end. Heaven awaits, and in the meantime we have a purpose to fulfill while we are here. We are called to live lives that make a difference in eternity. We should not settle for loving this world and all that it has to offer. Our purpose and fulfillment should only be found in things that matter in eternity. But God can purpose our mistakes for good. There is a greater purpose in all our sorrows and celebrations. Because of Paul's chains, he

was able to reach a group of soldiers he otherwise would not have been able to reach. When we live for Christ, we realize we have gained heaven. Paul was able to rejoice, despite his circumstances, because his hope and his joy were not found in the present, but in what would be found in the life to come.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What do you think it practically means to live with eternity in mind?

Week One Reflection

...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

What does it mean that Jesus will bring the good work in us to completion?

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

PHILIPPIANS 1:9

Why is it important to couple love with knowledge and discernment and not separate them?

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

What advantages or gains is Paul referring to when he says, "to live in Christ" and "to die is to gain"?

...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

PHILIPPIANS 1:28

What might we be frightened right now in our life and how do we stand firm with courage?

And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

PHILIPPIANS 1:14

In what ways did God turn Paul's imprisonment and sufferings to this advantage?

Do nothing out of selfish ambition
or vain conceit. Rather, in humility
value others above yourselves.

BIBLE READING

Phil 2:1-4 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

DEVOTIONAL

One of the most difficult things we can do in life is to live a life of humility that values others above ourselves. It's a constant battle; a fight between our selfish flesh and the selfless spirit of God within us. And it's impossible to do apart from the power of Christ working within us. Instead of having a selfish, self-centered to-do list, we release our wants, dreams, and desires for something far greater! Life isn't about accomplishments, but rather relationships: our relationship with Christ and our relationship with others. How we live our lives really comes down to a question we have to answer daily: will we live for Christ or will we live for ourselves? When we live for ourselves - our wants, our desires, and our dreams - we become our own focus, not Jesus. But what if we chose differently? What if we wake up each morning and choose Jesus? Before our feet hit the floor, let's surrender our day to Him. Instead of having an inward focus, let's reach out in humility to others, recognizing ways we can be Jesus' hands and feet right where He has placed us. Humility isn't thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less often...and prioritizing His will over our own.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What are some practical ways you can value others above yourself this week?

BIBLE READING

Phil 2:5-9 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

DEVOTIONAL

We really have two options for how we see ourselves and the world around us. We either see ourselves as one who serves, or as one who de-serves. If you see yourself as someone who has earned or is entitled and therefore deserves the service of others, you will never be someone who serves others. Paul is making it clear in this passage that Jesus was, above anyone else, deserving of status and deserving to be served by others. However, he cast that privilege aside and instead chose to serve and be obedient to the father. What an example He has set for each one of us! He humbled Himself even to the point of laying down His life for others. In the same way, each of us should also humble ourselves, not thinking we are entitled or deserving of anything, and lay down our lives for those around us. It is in our humility that God will be exalt and it is in this way of living that we will lead those around us to declare that Jesus is Lord!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What is the greatest challenge for you in this day and age to live in humility?

BIBLE READING

Phil 2:12-13 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever walked to the top of a skyscraper or looked over the railing of a giant bridge? Looking down below, your heart begins to race and you make sure to hold on to something just in case a gust of wind comes. This is the type of fear we should have of the Lord. Not a fear that paralyzes us, but a healthy reverence and awe that causes us to hold closer to Him. This is also how we should view the salvation Jesus has offered to us. Not lightly or with apathy or entitlement, but as the verse says: with fear and trembling. Not a fear of losing our salvation or being rejected by God on a whim, but rather a healthy respect of what salvation is and an ongoing appreciation of the cross and what we have been saved from. Never lose this view of Jesus and the cross! Don't take for granted or cast aside what He laid His life down for!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What are some practical ways you can remain thankful of the salvation you have in Christ?

BIBLE READING

Phil 2:14-18 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

DEVOTIONAL

If we're being honest, not a day goes by that we aren't complaining about something. We may not even realize we are doing it but from the time we wake up each day we complain about traffic, bills, work, our boss, our spouse, the house, schedules...etc. Grumbling and complaining is a tough habit to break free from. But if you are serious about becoming a non-grumbler, the first step in combating a complaining attitude is to control what we allow our minds to focus on. This means taking every thought captive. The world is watching to see if what we say we believe is reflected in how we live our lives. Our purpose is to reflect Christ to a world that is desperately searching for a Savior. We have an opportunity with our lives to show the world the difference Christ makes in us through our love, actions, choices, and speech. This world will disappoint us, try to defeat us, and discourage us to no end. But we are not made for this world, so our source of joy is not found here either. When we view our earthly home as what it is – temporary - we are free to hold this world loosely, knowing heaven is coming. Instead of allowing complaints and arguments to waste our time, may we choose to focus our minds on ways to be a light in this world to a generation who desperately needs Jesus.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What is something practical you can do today to break out of the habit of complaining?

BIBLE READING

Phil 2:19-30 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

DEVOTIONAL

Many of us like to make to-do lists. There is a certain satisfaction in checking off things on your list. It makes you feel like your day or weekend wasn't a waste of time. Accomplishments make us feel important. But not all accomplishments are equal. In the midst of all our errands, it's easy to forget that our true purpose here on earth is to glorify God and expand the Kingdom of God with the days He has given us. Timothy was such an encouragement to Paul because instead of seeking his own interests, Timothy sought the Lord's. In the same way, let's make sure that our own schedules aren't consumed with doing only things that will benefit ourselves and seek to serve our own interests. We are called to first look out for the interests of Christ and prioritize the things of God and His purpose for us above all else.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What are some practical ways you can remain thankful of the salvation you have in Christ?

Week Two Reflection

...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

PHILIPPIANS 2:2

What are the greatest obstacles in your life to being like-minded and unified with those you do life with?

...rather, he made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

PHILIPPIANS 2:7

How can we, like Christ, take on the very nature of a servant? What does that look like for you?

...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

What do you think God's purpose is for your life?

...as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

PHILIPPIANS 2:16

What do you think it looks like in everyday life to hold onto the word of life?

Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.

PHILIPPIANS 2:28

Paul was a real person with real feelings. Like many people today, Paul struggled with anxiety. In your own life, what is an area that causes you to feel anxious?

But whatever were gains to me I now
consider loss for the sake of Christ.
What is more, I consider everything a
loss because of the surpassing worth
of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...

BIBLE READING

Phil 3:1-4 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

DEVOTIONAL

It's always a joy to watch people do something they are good at, whether that is dancing, wood carving, playing an instrument, or something that requires a lot of athletic ability. People who have become experts in an area have a certain sense of confidence in their craft that is admirable. That confidence comes and is built upon talents, ability and many hours of hard work. When it comes to salvation however, we really should have no confidence in the flesh, meaning we should not have confidence in our abilities, talents or hard work. Because none of these things have contributed to our spiritual status in the least. The only thing that we should have confidence in when it comes to spiritual matters is Christ Himself, because it is Jesus who is the source and foundation of what our spiritual standing is built upon. Salvation is a free gift that we cannot earn or work towards; it's not based on how good we are but rather how good God is. Let's be people who live out our lives with this in mind. It will help us to walk in humility and not get caught up working to earn salvation...something that can never be done.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What does it look like in everyday life to look out for the interests of Christ?

BIBLE READING

Phil 3:5-11 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

DEVOTIONAL

Have you ever been in a conversation with a "topper"? Someone who always owns something better, or had an experience that was in some way better than yours. They are sure to point it out to somehow make your experience seem less than it was. In this passage Paul is doing the complete opposite. He's listing all these things he has done and in the end he's declaring that they are all worthless garbage in comparison to Christ. What an incredible thing to think about! In light of what we have in Christ, nothing else compares. Nothing this world has to offer comes close to the blessing of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Let's live lives that reflect this truth! May our hearts continually desire for more of Him and less of this world. May we be people who seek after God's righteousness day by day - not out of pride but out of love and a knowledge that nothing this world can offer what we find in Christ.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

In what ways do we often prioritize "garbage" over the things of God?

BIBLE READING

Phil 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

DEVOTIONAL

We've all seen a movie that got us to our feet, cheering on the hero as they overcome some major obstacle. Maybe they completed an impossible journey or defeated a much stronger foe, or maybe they crossed the finish line in first place. The thing we love about these stories is how the hero presses on despite the circumstances and everything that stands in their way. This is what we are called to as Christians! We press on! That is the battle cry of our hearts as we daily live our lives, not for our glory, but His. We let go of the past, the pain, the heartbreak, and the disappointments. We let go of the weight that pulls us down into depression or into despair, and instead we choose to live our lives full of faith and pursuit of Christ. We take God at His Word. In Christ we are a new creation. We have a new start and we choose to run. We run our race for God's glory! We press into Him on the hard days because now we do not run our races alone. Jesus has made us His own and He's not only waiting for us at the finish line, He's been running the race along side of us the whole time.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What does it look like in your own life right now to "Press on" despite the circumstances?

BIBLE READING

Phil 3:15-19 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained. 17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

DEVOTIONAL

It's amazing how much our mood can change when we get hungry. There is even a term for it, called "hangry", where someone gets angry and in a bad mood until they get something to eat. In a sense, this is what Paul is referring to when he's declaring that enemies of the cross are people whose god is their stomach. This means that they are people who live for temporary earthly desires and pleasures. He then clarifies this by saying that their mind is set on earthly things instead of the things of heaven. As Christians, we are called to live our lives with eternity in mind. Are the things we're working for and striving for going to show up in heaven? Everything that is not of heaven is headed the way of destruction. Let's be people who lift our eyes up, investing in and pointing people towards eternal things. Because those are the only investments that truly matter.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What are some practical ways we can make an eternal investment this week?

BIBLE READING

Phil 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

DEVOTIONAL

Everybody loves a good makeover. Whether it's a scruffy looking man who gets a haircut, or a total body transformation, or even a home or room makeover, we love seeing before and afters. And there is nothing wrong with this; improving a space in your home or taking time to workout, eat healthier and get in shape are all good things. But we need to put it all into perspective. In a spiritual sense, this world is not our home and this body is not our body. We are citizens of heaven. One day, all those who are followers of Christ will trade in this life for an eternal life, trade in your body for a new body and trade in your home for a new home in heaven. Which home should we be investing in? Which body should we be spending the most of our time prioritizing? Sometimes we just need to be reminded that this world is not our home and nothing will last beyond it except for the human souls. When troubles come, when disaster strikes, and we feel the heartache of a broken, sin-filled world, we need to be reminded that it doesn't really matter all that much in light of eternity. When we feel out of place, it's okay. We have the hope of heaven in our hearts; that a better tomorrow is coming. For now we are in the waiting, but it won't last forever. The best is yet to come...and it's going to be a glorious makeover.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

How does the realization that this world is not your home change how you live?

Week Three Reflection

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!

PHILIPPIANS 3:1

What is something that you can rejoice and be thankful for right now?

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7

How would you interpret what this verse means in relation to your own life?

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead...

PHILIPPIANS 3:13

What things of your past do you need to forget so that you can push forward towards what is ahead?

Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

PHILIPPIANS 3:16

How would you interpret what this verse means in relation to the rest of the passage?

But our citizenship is in heaven.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

How should the truth of this verse impact how we raise up the next generation?

Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable
—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—
think about such things.

BIBLE READING

Phil 4:1-5 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! 2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

DEVOTIONAL

The Bible is full of very interesting and specific words. Nothing in the Bible is there by accident. One of these interesting and specifically chosen words is "rejoice". The prefix "Re" means again, and the suffix "jice" means "joy". So the word "rejoice" really means "joy again", or "joy joy" or even "double joy". Think about that. We are not simply called to live as people full of joy, but when we come before the Lord, we are to be full of double joy! No matter what is going on in our lives, we always have a reason to rejoice because of our relationship with Christ. He is near: near to the brokenhearted; near to the lonely person; near to those who feel rejected. Because of this truth we rejoice, knowing that God is in control, what He has done for us and how we can find rest in Him.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What is the most difficult obstacle to coming to God overflowing with double joy?

BIBLE READING

Phil 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

DEVOTIONAL

We live in a world that gives us hundreds of reasons and excuses for why it should be perfectly normal to live in worry, anxiety and fear as part of your everyday life. Yet in Scripture we read that we should not worry or be anxious about anything. There are no exceptions to this, like: "you should not be anxious...except if you are having financial trouble, or if you got a negative health report... then it's okay." Why does God command us not to worry or live in anxiety? It is because of what is happening in our minds and hearts in those moments. You cannot worship God and worry at the same time...it's impossible. Worship is declaring that God is on the throne and we choose to put our trust and faith in him, and worry is the opposite of that. Worry and anxiety is taking God off the throne and saying that he is incapable of taking care of our needs. Worry and worship cannot happen simultaneously! Whenever worry or anxiety comes into your mind, let that be an instant reminder for you to re-align your eyes on Jesus instead of the thing you are anxious about. Begin to pray right then; bring that anxiety to God. Begin to worship God and sing praises to him. Let's be people who are quick to turn worry into worship and panic into praise!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What in life right now are you most worried and anxious about?
What should you do about it?

BIBLE READING

Phil 4:8-9 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

DEVOTIONAL

One ugly fact of journalism is that statistically people are more likely to be drawn to and pass along bad news over good news. This has led to our current structure of news programming and even led to the journalism cliché, "If it bleeds, it leads". As humans, we are drawn to dwell on negative thoughts as a default far more than positive ones. In order to fight against this natural desire, we have to be intentional about dwelling on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. This is important because what we allow our minds to focus on influences our actions. That's why it's so important to pay attention to what we are thinking about. Are we focusing on the freedom we have in Christ? Are we intentionally renewing our minds with God's truth? Or are we allowing our minds to replay our minds to replay past mistakes, untruths, and hurts over and over again. God made our minds to be powerful, but we must learn how to cultivate thoughts that are helpful and life-giving instead of harmful and debilitating. What we think about we often bring about. Let's examine our lives and the information we are allowing to influence us through television, news, books, and social media. Let's be people who choose to focus on God's truth instead of the world.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What is the main source of the negative thoughts that you personally tend to dwell on?

BIBLE READING

Phil 4:10-13 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

DEVOTIONAL

Revealing secrets is a billion dollar business. Everyone loves to be on the inside of a secret. We want to know the secret to a long life, the secret to success, the secret to a healthy marriage, the secret family recipe, the secret of finding true happiness. Many of these secrets (except the family recipe) can be found in God's word. Paul even writes here that he had found the secret to being content in any situation and he even tells us in the next verse what it is. That seems like a secret we should all want, right? The secret to being content is that Jesus is our source. He is the one who gives us strength, He gives us peace, happiness, joy, hope and provision. Paul conveys in this passage that over the years and through his experiences, he's learned to depend on Jesus, and it turns out that he, as well as you and I, should have been doing that the whole time. You will never lead a better, happier and more fulfilling life than a life spent depending on Jesus. This doesn't mean your life is going to be easy, but it will be rewarding and it will leave an eternal impact.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

How would you describe your life currently in terms of how content you are?

BIBLE READING

Phil 4:14-23 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 21 Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. 22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

DEVOTIONAL

There are many examples in nature of symbiotic relationships; where one plant or animal benefits the other in strange ways. The most common of these relationships are the examples of pollinating honey bees and plants. The plants provide the bees with nectar to make honey and the bees help the plants to grow by cross pollinating the plants. Our relationship with Christ is not an example of this, because Christ doesn't need anything from us. There is nothing we can do for Christ that He couldn't do for Himself. However, Scripture reminds us that our relationship with Christ is a partnership. As we step out in faith to the calling He has on our lives, He steps out with us and supplies us with just what we need as we depend on Him for wisdom, strength, and our daily needs. It's really a one-sided partnership, and one that benefits us far more than Him, but your faithful Father is perfect in all of His ways and is eager to help you. When you give your needs over to God and trust Him to provide, you are positioned to see His greatness on display and watch Him move in a supernatural way in your life.

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT

What is an example of how God met a need that you had in life?

Week Four Reflection

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

PHILIPPIANS 4:4

What do you think is your next step in becoming a person who is joyful in all circumstances?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

How are constant anxiety and fear overcome according to the passages we've read?

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

What do you think it looks like practically to train your mind to think about good things?

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

PHILIPPIANS 4:11

How would you define what contentment looks like in everyday life?

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles

PHILIPPIANS 4:14

As a Christian, what does it look like for us to share in another persons trouble and help them with a burden?

The entire book of Philippians was written by Paul while he was in prison. Think about that. Paul was under intense pressure and in the worst of circumstances. He had been arrested, beaten and thrown into prison because of his faith, yet he used that circumstance not only to continue his ministry, but expand it in a great way. Paul goes out of his way to write a book that was full of joy, hope and peace -- even when he very easily could have written from a place of doubt and despair. The same can be true in our lives. We can face intense financial, health, or job related pressures yet still live our life in a way that continually promotes peace, joy and hope in Christ. This is what we are called to as Christians and this is how the church can be a light in a dark world. Whenever the world gets darker and more hopeless, we can choose to shine brighter as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Congratulations on completing this 28-day study of the book of Philippians. Keep digging into Gods word and watch how it impacts your life!

