

**LEADER'S COPY**



**Bible Studies**

*the letter to the philippians*



*advance  
the  
Gospel*

# Turn your weekly home group into a 15 minute prayer meeting for the advance of the gospel!

Why not take every second prayer-time this term and dedicate it to praying for the advance of the gospel? Here are three different prayer formats!

	<b>Prayer Meeting 1: Workers for the Harvest</b>	<b>Prayer Meeting 2: Growing Disciples</b>	<b>Prayer Meeting 3: All the pockets and people groups of Maroubra (and beyond!)</b>
<b>Read</b>	Psalm 47	Psalm 96	Psalm 98
<b>Praise God Together!</b>	Varied points of praise	Varied points of praise	Varied points of praise
<b>Read</b>	<b>Matthew 9:35-38</b>	<b>Matthew 28:16-20</b>	<b>Acts 1:6-8</b>
<b>Pray for</b>	Heather Zhang as she reads the bible in Mandarin with enquirers	Reuben Salagaras, Yvette Walker & Pete Ling as they lead the 'St John's Course' for growing disciples this term	For varied ethnic groups: Indonesians, Chinese, Jews, Greeks, Russians, French, Aboriginal
	Leaders of KAOS (Christine, Joel, Imogen, Kru, Peter, Cara, Ken, as they evangelise kids	For new people at 6pm to do the course in term 3—pray that God would use it to plant people deeply in Jesus' word and godly life practices	For 'lifestyle' tribes: Surfers, Nippers, varied mobs of teenagers, Mums and Bubs, Unemployed people
	For 6pm as it tries to develop a local outreach strategy, and for Dan as he directs that	For those meeting 1 on 1 with others in discipling relationships	Steve Bligh as he reaches Surfers; Stuart Adamson at the Hospital, Ray Beckman at Long Bay Jail
	For Josh, Emma, Sophie and Damien as they keep serving the youth	For any new members you know of in your congregation—for their growth and maturing by obedience to Jesus	For local schools—public and high.
	For workers as we approach Good News Week again!		For the Bennett's in Addis Ababa
	For Amy Nasserri as she leads us out into Maroubra this year		For the Horne's in Leipzig
	For ourselves as we prepare for the next round of storming the doors of Maroubra		For International Care Ministries in the Philippines

# study 1 Philippians 1:1-11

# the partners prayer

## Getting the Big Picture on Philippians



Read Philippians 1:1-2

OK. Let's pool what we know about... **Leaders, if people are clueless—shoot them the following texts to work with...**

1. Paul: **Philippians 3:4-7**
2. Timothy: **Acts 16:1-3**
3. 'saints': **just the word for Christians in the NT, borrowed from the same word used for righteous Jews before.**
4. 'Philippi': **see map**
5. 'overseers and deacons': **1 Tim 3:1-1**

## Pray

Pray that God would guide your thoughts, and give you humility to sit under his word and learn.



## Getting Started

Have you ever experienced a really well-functioning team.

What are the things that are essential to a great shared team experience?

**The point of this is just to get people chatting and warmed up and generally raise themes like unity, shared vision, love, care for each other, etc.**

As you will see, the opening of Philippians sees some real partnership, some fine relationships in a shared vision....and the kind of prayer-life that flows from that.

## Getting into the text: Joyful Prayer



Read Philippians 1:3-6

1. Why does Paul pray?
2. How does he pray? **Leaders should note there are multiple answers here—always, joyfully, with confidence**
3. Who does he pray for? **A question not as simple as it sounds—his Philippian 'partners in the gospel'**
4. 'Partners in the gospel' is an interesting phrase. Let's spend some time understanding it in groups.
  - Group 1—How is the partnership expressed (Phil 1:19; 2:19-30; 4:10-18)
  - Group 2—What is the gospel they have partnership in? (try 3:7-11)
  - Group 3—How does Paul feel about the partnership (especially 1:7-8)

## Going Deeper

You may not have been as excited about partnership in the gospel as Paul clearly is,...until now. Can one of your group think about a person who partnered them in the gospel, and consider the effect of that partnership on them? Can they tell the group about this—either now...or maybe after some thinking time at the beginning of next week.

## study 1 (cont.)

## the partners prayer

### Getting into the Text Again: Paul's Prayer



Read Philippians 1:9-11

1. List Paul's prayer points
2. Are all these points equal, or is there a main point? What is it?
3. Why is 'more and more' love important? (v11)

### Thinking it through

Let's think about love abounding in knowledge (theory, if you like) and depth of insight (practical application, if you like)....

**Leaders...the word for 'depth of insight' is 'aesthesis' - a word which Peter O'Brien assures me in his big fat commentary is a word for practical, applied insight. So this leads me to conclude that Paul idea is, in a sense the theory and practice of love.**

*The theory of love*

Are you able to learn more about God? I mean—what are *your* impediments to learning more about God?

What do we need to know more about God to love more and more?

*The practice of love*

Where do you individually need more insight in order to love?

eg. how do you grow more insightful about how to love someone at church who you have just met?

### Pray

Write a prayer for another person in the group capturing Paul's prayer for his partners and pray it quietly for them. (Why not tell them later what you prayed for them?)

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# study 2 Philippians 1:12-30

# joyful suffering

### Recap from last week...

1. What do Paul and the Philippians have in common?
2. What does their partnership in the gospel lead Paul to do?

### Pray

Have someone in the group pray from 1:9-11 as we read on in Philippians.

### Getting Started

Imagine you are in jail wrongfully.....what would help you personally cope?

Paul is in jail wrongfully...let's see what went through his mind.

### Getting into the text: Joyful Suffering



Read Philippians 1:12-30

1. What is Paul's situation?
2. What is happening as a result of Paul being in jail?
3. The preaching of the gospel is clearly on view...complete the table

<b>Who is preaching?</b>	
<b>How?</b>	
<b>Their motive?</b>	
<b>The desired result?</b>	

4. What reasons does Paul give for rejoicing? (v18-19)
5. Paul has a choice to make—life or death....list his pros and cons

<b>LIFE</b>	<b>DEATH</b>
Pros	Pros
Cons	Cons

## study 2

## joyful suffering (cont.)



Read Philippians 1:27-30

1. What does Paul exhort the Philippians to do? Why?
2. Read v29-30. What could the common struggle be that Paul and the Philippians have?
3. Why has Paul noted that there is a common struggle?

### Going Deeper

1. In your experience—what common struggles do we face as Christians?
2. What does this passage teach us about responding to these struggles?
3. Which of these encouragements in struggle are most comforting to you? (talk in twos)

### Pray

# study 3 Philippians 2:1-16

# all about attitude

## Pray

Pray that God would guide your thoughts, and give you humility to sit under his word and learn.



Read Philippians 2:1-16

## Getting Started—Attitude!

a) Do the following table in pairs and discuss

	Who has formed your attitude most on these things?
money	
music	
sport	
food	
parenting	

b) Again, in pairs—have you changed any of these attitudes over time—name one, and explain why.

It is interesting to think how and why we change attitudes, isn't it?

## Getting into the text: Spirit & Purpose



Read Philippians 2:1– 4

1. What will make Paul's joy complete? **Leader 'being in one spirit and purpose, like-mindedness, having the same love'**
2. What things should we do so that we are 'being one in spirit and purpose'? (v.3-4) **consider others interests more important than yours**
3. Verse 4 says 'look not only to the interest of yourself but others' - how do we hold these two interests together?

## Getting into the text: Attitude!!!



Read Philippians 2:5-11

1. Paul encourages us to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, what are some of the characteristics we are to take on? **Inequality, humility, obedience**
2. If you had to pick an 'Attitude' that Jesus clearly displays for yourself what would it be? Why?
3. What was the result of Jesus attitude, his humbleness and obedience even to death on a cross?

## study 3

## all about attitude (cont.)

### Going Deeper

From this passage, does this result also apply to us if we have the same attitude of Christ Jesus?

**Leaders: This is meant to speak a theological debate!!! Are Christians exalted with Christ? (see Matt 19:28, Luke 14:11)**

**Is that the point of *this* passage?**

**Is exaltation the motivation to be like Jesus here?**

### Getting into the text: Attitudinal change



Read Philippians 2:12-16 below

<sup>12</sup>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, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

<sup>14</sup>Do everything without complaining or arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup>as you hold out<sup>[a]</sup> the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

1. Circle the linking words (eg. Therefore, for, so that)
2. What thoughts do they link?
3. Write out the logic in one sentence.

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4. Paul returns with all this motivation to the issue of complaining and arguing....why is it so important?  
**leader– becoming blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup>as you hold out the word of life**

### Summing up...

If you had to sum up Paul's purpose in writing... what would it be? Write it down...

### For personal reflection

We also live in a crooked and depraved generation. It's a pretty amazing that Paul believes the Philippians can shine like stars amongst them. To what areas of YOUR church life do you need to apply this attitude of Christ?

### Pray

Ask God that he might make us **One in Spirit and Purpose**, having the **attitude of Jesus** so that we might become **pure and blameless children of God, shining like stars** amongst the people we live with! What a call!

# study 4 Philippians 17-30

# model partners

## Pray

Pray that God would guide your thoughts, and give you humility to sit under his word and learn.

## Getting Started

Context: This is not just a travel itinerary, but the practical reality of partnership in the gospel 1:27—striving together in one spirit for the faith of the gospel  
We want to think tonight about our practical partnerships in the gospel.

## Getting into the text: In it all Together



Read Philippians 2:17-18

1. From verses 14-16: What does Paul fear most? **Them fighting, him labouring so hard for nothing, the gospel being dimmed and not shining.**
2. What does 'poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith' mean? (Check out Exodus 29:38-41 for the background to a drink offering)
3. Does verse 17 suggest that Paul is happy even if his fears from question 1 come true? Why/Why not?
4. Read verse 18—Why should they be glad and rejoice with him?

## Going Deeper

How do you know if you are really 'with' others in something?

## Getting into the text: Model Partner #1....Timothy



Read Philippians 2:19-24

Timothy the 'interested'

1. Compare 2:20-21 with 2:4-5
2. What are the marks of someone who is genuinely interested in the interests of others, and in Christ's interest?
3. Is this just a matter of personality—good for some, but not all - or is Paul promoting Timothy as a model for all?

Timothy the 'proven'

1. Why is Timothy proven? (v 22)
2. What do you think is the effect and authority of the image of working 'as a son with his father'? (**obedience? Deepness of fellowship? Now really knows his stuff? Like an apprentice on steroids?**)
3. How important is proven-ness when someone arrives in our fellowship to serve?
4. If it is not important—why? If it is—is assessing 'proven-ness' easy? Does it threaten to make us judgmental and unwelcoming?

## Going Deeper

Is there a tension between two great values—valuing being welcoming of people and accepting, or testing the proven-ness of someone's partnership in the gospel with you?

## study 4 (cont.)

## model partners

### Getting into the text: Model Partner #2...Epaphroditus



Read Philippians 2:25-29

1. How is Epaphroditus described? **Brother, worker, soldier**
2. Why is he not a 'son' (like Timothy), but a 'brother'? Does it matter?
3. Fellow-soldier?!!! Why is the bible so heavy-armoured at times?
4. Look through verses 25-28 and count how many affectionate acts or thoughts are done out of a real spirit of partnership and love.
  - eg. Paul realises he should send Epaphroditus back.
  - They had already sent Epaphroditus because of Paul's needs.
  - etcI count.....well, how many do you count?

### Going Deeper

What a picture of real, affectionate, selfless relationships as people partner with each other for the gospel. We could apply this to our own partnership in church, between different ministries.

But let's think about our missionary partners. Let's do a quiz to reveal our interest.

Write your answers on a scrap of paper and then add up the totals together—this is not to catch individuals out!!!

1. What are the surnames of our 2 present overseas partner families? **Bennett, Horne**
2. The B\_\_\_\_\_s serve in which African country? **Ethiopia**
3. What would you say the major issues are for them that we should be interested in? **1. Establishing Christian culture in the staff and management of the Fistula hospital**  
**2. Kids education issues**
4. The H\_\_\_\_\_s are in which city? **Leipzig**
5. they have 4 kids, can you name 2? **Claudia, Francesca, Isaac, Jackson**
6. our local mission partners are
  - A. **Stuart Adamson**
  - B. **Ray Beckman**
  - C. **Steve Bligh**

Score your groups interest in these gospel partners.  
How did you do together?

What do you need to do to ensure a 'genuine interest' in their welfare?

### Pray and Do

Pray for our gospel partners!

Do what you need to do gain a genuine interest in their welfare. (write a letter, send a gift, commit to regular prayer...???)

# study 5 Philippians 3:1-11

true confidence

## Pray

Pray that God would guide your thoughts, and give you humility to sit under his word and learn.

## Getting Started

When have you ever been part of a team, band or group where you appeared to fit in (had a groovy uniform, brand new instrument or a dazzling stamp collection) but knew deep down that you didn't?

## Getting into the text: In it all Together



Read Philippians 3:1-4

1. What words are repeated in the opening 4 verses? What does this word mean?
2. Who are these dogs and those mutilators of the flesh that Paul refers to? (v.4)
3. What do these people have to do with the circumcision referenced in verse 3?

## Going Deeper



Read Philippians 3:4-7

1. Paul has an impressive résumé doesn't he? Is it important to have an impressive résumé as a Christian? Isn't baptism, confirmation, following the law, being nice, born to Christian parents and being a regular church attendee important? Why/Why not?
2. Isn't outward appearance important? **(Leaders might consider Paul's desire to be right in appearance, and for his elders to be so—1 Thess 2:6b-10; 1 Tim 3:7)**  
Surely we need these things to be taken seriously as a Christian?

## Getting into the text



Read Philippians 3: 7-11

Knowing Paul better..... Read Acts 9:3-16

1. Why does Paul dismiss his impressive résumé?
2. Does Paul need to dismiss his current résumé as RUBBISH if he is to KNOW Christ?
3. Isn't it easier for Paul to dismiss his résumé as God spoke to him directly?
4. Why is knowledge of the power of Jesus' resurrection and sharing in His sufferings important?

## Thinking it Through

1. What qualifications might you be tempted to list on your Christian résumé (be honest)? Are they important?
2. Do you need to dismiss any to know God?
3. Do you truly feel part of God's family? Forget the superficial items or qualifications and ask yourself if you're confident in Christ.

## Pray

Thank God that we have circumcision of the heart. Pray that we will hold onto this and remember it and not to boast in circumcisions that are rubbish.

# study 6 Philippians 3:1 2-4:1

# true maturity

**Pray**  
Pray

## Getting Started

'You are so immature', was a phrase that got a good workout in my house when I was younger. Paul exhorts the Philippians to mature thinking in today's passage.

Where have you found maturity to be an indispensable part of the Christian life?

Where have you seen it missing, and felt its absence greatly?

How do you know that you have assessed anything above correctly? What on earth is maturity????

Now we find out.

## Getting into the text



Read Philippians 3:12-14

1. Consider v.12—Not that I have obtained what? **It ain't righteousness—because that's by faith (3:9) and Paul has that! It must be the power of resurrection and sharing in his sufferings, and of course, the resurrection from the dead.**
2. What is the great prize of the Christian life? **I think it is resurrection from the dead. Or more accurately, as Paul will expand on in v20-21: heavenly citizenship & glorious bodies!**
3. The images of v.13b and 14 are so powerful—what does it put you in mind of? **An athlete? Which athlete? A Himalayan mountain climber? Perhaps the leader should share their own mental picture and invite others to think about it.**
4. Do you find the image inspiring? Why?

## Going Deeper

What in your life do you feel you aim at with such unswerving commitment? Is there anything? What shows your commitment to that goal or prize?

Do you strain for this goal more profoundly than for heaven?

## Getting into the text



Read Philippians 3:15-16

1. Ah, here we are—maturity! The mark of maturity is for Paul is....? **Straining for eternity.**
2. I would love to push, pull and cajole people to think like this—but does Paul? **Yes. He urges them now....and yet, he seems patient...trusting in God's work and timing in them.**  
**A good follow question may be—has God made the great prize of eternity clear to you? When did you mature in this way in your Christian life? how did it happen?**
3. v.16 is a curious little verse. After all this straining forward, why does Paul want us to live up to what we have already gained? Didn't he say 'forgetting what is past'?

## Going Deeper

Maturity comes from changing your mind. V.14-15 reads most accurately 'Let those how are mature be like-minded, and if on some point you are differently-minded, that too God will make clear to you.'

William Taylor, a commentator on Philippians writes, 'Spiritually mature Christians will invest their present in the future'

## study 6 (cont.)

## true maturity

### Getting into the text

You have already begun to outline the pattern of life of the mature. Paul goes on to lay it out for himself.



Read Philippians 3:17-21

Complete the table...

The immature are...	The mature are...

1. Do you think the many who live as enemies of the cross of Christ are all unbelievers? **I ain't sure actually, but there is at least a scary chance that they are 'believers'!**
2. There is a real sense in which the victory of the mature is not their own—or even all that obvious now—but coming when Jesus returns—how? **He will transform us. What we do now seems to be only an anticipation and a waiting for that.**
3. The images of v.13b and 14 are so powerful—what does it put you in mind of? **An athlete? Which athlete? A Himalayan mountain climber? Perhaps the leader should share their own mental picture and invite others to think about theirs.**

### Going Deeper

What in your life do you feel you aim at with such unswerving commitment? Is there anything?  
What shows your commitment to that goal or prize?

### Thinking it through

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown,  
that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. (4:1)

Gather in pairs.....be honest...what are the things that drag your mind earth-ward?

Would you pray for each other?

Is there anything you need to do right now—to throw off - or change? Help each other in any way you can, start by praying.

# study 7 Philippians 4:2-9

## ners

## peaceful part-

### Pray

Pray for energy in tiredness or distraction, for real concentration to pay attention to God's word.



Read Philippians 4:2-9

### Getting Started

Perhaps you have notice by now that as thrilled as Paul is with the Philippians, he is a little worried about their capacity for in-fighting.

Give each of these verses to a group member and read them one after the other. Then spend some time trying to piece together the infighting that might have been occurring in the church at Philippi.

1:15-17

1:27

2:1-4

2:14-16

4:2

### Getting into the text



Read Philippians 4:2-3

1. Euodia and Syntyche (according to 4:3) seem to have formerly lived out Philippians 1:27... something has happened. We know nothing of Euodia and Syntyche's fight, but Paul wants his loyal fellow in Philippi to help them. How might he do that? **Them fighting, him labouring so hard for nothing, the gospel being dimmed and not shining.**
2. The theme of agreeing is a common one in Philippians. (Remember 1:27; 2:2; 3:15) What should Euodia and Syntyche agree in?

### Going Deeper: A Hypothetical

Two of your friends at church, both Christian, both good value, are complaining and grumbling about each other. From Philippians—what advice would you give them?

### Getting into the text



Read Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

1. Often this passage is lifted out of Philippians as a 'purple passage' on prayer. But it seems to me it fits in the argument....and I mean in the *argument* between Euodia and Syntyche. What clues can you find in these verses that it is not just about prayer, but about gaining peace from in-fighting? Underline them.
2. If this is the context for the prayer—what do you think is meant by 'The Lord is near'?
3. Compare these verses and 1 Timothy 2:8—see any common ideas?

### Going Deeper

A '70-word-or-less-personal-testimony':

*I have regularly felt the temptation in church life to whine and moan about others, and it begins a down-ward spiral in which all things church begin to be tainted and unhappy. I have personally found the regular praise of God lifts my eyes to so many good things that I can no longer put up with my own negativity, and can more happily endure the negativity of others.*

5. Write your own '70-word-or-less-personal-testimony' concerning division and prayer (it may not be as sunny as mine—just be honest):
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## study 7 (cont.)

## peaceful partners

### Going Deeper

A '70-word-or-less-personal-testimony':

*I have regularly felt the temptation in church life to whine and moan about others, and it begins a down-ward spiral in which all things church begin to be tainted and unhappy. I have personally found the regular praise of God lifts my eyes to so many good things that I can no longer put up with my own negativity, and can more happily endure the negativity of others.*

Write your own '70-word-or-less-personal-testimony' concerning division and prayer (it may not be as sunny as mine—just be honest):

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### Getting into the text



Read Philippians 4:8-9

1. Note the way Paul ties together the peace of God and the God of peace—(v7 and v9) - nice huh? How does the logic work...

\_\_\_\_\_ and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds.

\_\_\_\_\_ and the God of Peace will be with you.

2. Such discipline of mind is being asked for from Paul in verse 8. Is this just 'the power of positive thinking'?

### Thinking it through

To do this study without thinking concretely about our brothers and sisters in the gospel who we disagree with would be hypocritical. Spend a minute alone....think about those people with whom you are in a fight, or could easily be.

This passage encourages you to

1. Praise God
2. Request what you need from God.
3. Change your thinking.

Why not do it now?

**Leaders—you may need to send people off to private reflection time for this. Depending on your space it may be hard. You at the very least want to send people whom with a real urgency to doing it there.**

# study 8 Phil 4:10-23

# gospel-advancing generosity

## Pray

It's our final study—pray that God would cement some of the things we have learnt together and that he would bear fruit through tem.



Read Philippians 4:10-23

## Getting Started

Describe the best gift you have ever received?

## Getting into the text:

Revision

1. Who did the Philippians send to Paul? (Phil:2:25)
2. Why does Paul send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians?



Read Philippians 4:10-20

1. Why does Paul rejoice?
2. Why is Paul content no matter the circumstances?
3. We always seem to have issues of discontentment (Eg. Financial crisis, sickness, weather). How can we find contentment in these times?

## Going Deeper

Re-write verse 17 in your own words:

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Why is the gifts from the Philippians to Paul pleasing to God?

What does God give in return to those that give?

Should this be our motive for giving?

# **study 8 Phil 4:10-23(cont.) gospel-advancing generosity**

## **Thinking it Through**

How does God meet 'all our needs' (v.19)?

Does God 'meeting our needs' impact upon our giving?

## **Our Giving**

How do you determine what you give to the Church and related ministries?

**(Leaders, really emphasise that is not the dollar amount that is the key here but it is their motive for giving)**

Is the gift more or less important than the act of giving?

Does this mean that we do not need to consider the actual gift itself?

**(Discuss what sacrifice means and how it can VERY VARIED among different individuals)**

How do you know how much you should be giving? In particular, monetary giving. Should we be tithing?

## **Prayer**

Pray open and honestly in pairs about the reasons you give and whether these are in alignment to what Paul says.