



Philippians for Today

Welcome to a new study series that is intended to help you take a fresh look at the letters of the Apostle Paul.

To emphasize how contemporary Paul's letters really are, the recommended text is the Contemporary English Version (CEV).

For your convenience the CEV text of Philippians is being provided in a separate booklet. You will also need access to a complete Bible of whatever translation you ordinarily use.

Philippians is all about our human quest for joy and peace.

This first study in the Philippians will explore what the first chapter of Paul's letter has to say about the importance of "**Making the Right Choices.**"

Paul says, "I pray that your love will keep on growing and that you will fully know and understand how to make the right choices." (Phil. 1:9 & 10)

Choosing a Translation

If regular Bible reading is part of your world then you probably have a favourite translation. It may be the one to which you were first introduced, or you may have chosen it because of the familiarity of the language, the beauty of the English or the clarity of understanding that it seems to provide.

Some translations are quite literal (i.e. attempt to provide a word for word translation of the original Greek and Hebrew texts). Other translations may focus on attempting to represent the thoughts and ideas of the original text.

While we ought always to be concerned about the accuracy and faithfulness of any translation to the original texts, it is hard to choose a "best" translation. Our choice often depends on the audience and the context.

For these studies the recommended text is that of the Contemporary English Version. It is hoped that it will bring freshness to what Paul has written.

This translation was styled to be read aloud and that is the recommended approach. By reading the text of Paul's letter out loud it is hoped that there will be benefit for both the reader and the small group sharing in the study

"Making Right Choices"

The theme that we will focus on from the first chapter of Philippians is that of making right choices.

While we all appreciate the significance of right choices in life there is an extra challenge that we sometimes overlook. The truth is that we often make important choices without even realizing that we are doing so.

Our choices in life are often so subtle, and involve so many seemingly inconsequential steps, that we may find that we have made a commitment to something without being conscious of actually having made any choice at all.

Paul helps us prepare ourselves for this reality of living. He invites his readers to live with a constant and conscious awareness of the implications of their actions.

It would be fair to say that for Paul all decisions in life have spiritual implications. Our relationship with Jesus Christ becomes a crucial factor in every choice we make.

We have all made decisions in life which, in retrospect, we know did not represent the best choice - either for our practical living or for our faith. For Paul the right choices in life will always lead to both spiritual and practical blessing.

Philippians, Chapter One

First, read through the whole chapter.

Then, reread the text - pausing at intervals to make sure you understand it.

A Simple Outline

Vss. 1 & 2. The authors, the recipients and a greeting.

Vss. 3-11. Paul's prayer for his readers.

Vss. 12-30. Paul explains what he values.

Some notes that may be useful:

The exact details of the letter are uncertain. Since Paul was a prisoner when he wrote, it could have been from Ephesus (c. 53-55 AD), from Caesarea (c.57-59 AD) or from Rome (c.61 AD).

Philippi was the leading Roman city in the province of Macedonia.

For Paul's associations with Philippi see: Acts 16:11-40; Acts 20:6; 1 Thess. 2:2.

vs. 1. Re. Timothy See Acts 16:1-5

vs. 7. Re. being "in jail". See note above.

vs.15. Re. jealousy and envy. There were some tensions in the Christian community.

vs.23. Re. wanting to die. He is not giving up on life but anticipating an eternal reward.

vs.30 Re. seeing Paul suffer. See Acts 16:22.



For Reflection and Discussion

Approach these topics on two levels. First, you are encouraged to make them a matter of some searching personal reflection. They are also intended to spark group discussion.

Paul acknowledges a deep bond of affection with those to whom he is writing.

Are there people in your world who have "a special place in your heart" ?

How similar are your feelings for your special people with the affection Paul expresses for his readers?

Paul indicates that his response to his readers includes prayer (1:4 & 1:9).

How big a role does prayer have in your relationship with the people in your world?

Have you discovered any useful techniques or patterns to help you to remember to pray for the people in your world?

Paul desires that his readers will make the "right choices" in life. (1:10)

What factors did Paul think ought to go into making a "right choice"?

What factors may we be inclined to overlook when it comes to making "right choices" for ourselves?

How do we help other people in our world to make "right choices"?

Philippians Study # 1

Paul expresses a strong willingness to tolerate challenges as long as they ultimately lead to the spread of the Gospel.

What are some of the factors in our current situation to which this might apply?

**Paul desires that his readers would
"live in a way that brings honour to the good news about Christ." (1:27)**

What sorts of risks or dangers do you think Paul feared would prevent this from happening?

Paul associates suffering with the experience of being a Christian.

Do you think that association was more meaningful in Paul's era than for ours?

What forms of suffering may be associated with a life of faith today?

As time permits you may want to consider:

Was there anything in this first chapter of Philippians that has struck you as being a new thought or a new idea?

Is there anything in this passage that you have found to be particularly helpful for understanding or living your faith today?