



Stand and Rejoice



6 BIBLE STUDIES

1. SOWING, GROWING, SHARING, KNOWING
2. SUFFERING, REJOICING, REMAINING
3. THE GREAT TEA BAG
4. HONOUR PEOPLE LIKE THEM
5. GET RID OF THE RUBBISH AND STAND!
6. PEACE AND GRACE

1. Sowing, growing, sharing, knowing

Warm up: Why do you think people stop bothering with Christianity?



According to most commentators the city of Philippi was made up of Roman citizens and military personnel. But, because of where it was (Northeastern Macedonia) it was also very agricultural, and because it was on a major highway (the Via Egnatia) it had quite a transient and diverse population. Can you imagine living in a regional military town in the northeast with a rural feel and a transient population??? If you can, maybe you can relate to what it was like to live in the city of Philippi.

Sowing

Read Acts 16:11-15

1. Here we see the small beginnings of the church in Philippi. We learn here that there either weren't enough Jews to warrant the establishment of a synagogue in Philippi, or the Jewish religion wasn't formally recognized by the Roman colony (or both), because they had to meet in a place of prayer outside the city. Despite the small beginnings, Lydia – a dealer in purple cloth – believed. What led her to believe?

2. What happened immediately after Lydia responded to Paul's message?

Read Acts 16:16-40

3. Philippi was unique in that it was regarded as a Roman colony and Roman soil and the official language was even Latin. Roman citizens probably only made up around 40% of the population, but Roman citizenship had a distinct class advantage. This other major class division in Philippi was socio-economic. Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, was likely well connected and affluent. The Philippian jailer on the other hand was likely a former slave, now freed, who was able to support his family through his work. Look again at verses 29 to 34, despite the difference in their economic status, what do the jailer and Lydia have in common?

4. What do we learn here about who God works with? What do we learn about his people?

5. Consider the diverse members of our local community that you know. Is there a class of people you don't think will receive the gospel? How might you be able to point them to Jesus (knowing that the Lord might open their hearts)?

Growing

Read Philippians 1:1-2

6. We heard about a small handful of people in Acts 16 (around 49 AD) that became believers during Paul's first visit to a very secular Philippi. What impression do we get about the size of the church in Philippi at the time Paul wrote the opening to his letter (around 62AD)?

7. It's possible that Lydia's house, where the believers first met, could have eventually held 40 to 50 people in their weekly gatherings. In addition to that with multiple overseers and deacons it is possible that the church in Philippi was made up of multiple gatherings. What does this tell us about the Lord's power and what comfort/confidence does it offer us in our situation?

Sharing

Read Philippians 1:3-8

8. Paul's 'partnership in the gospel' has been the cause of his thankfulness and joy. What does he mean by 'partnership in the gospel' (see for example Acts 16:15; 34, Philippians 4:15-16)? Since when have they been partners?

9. What is Paul confident of regarding the Philippians?

10. What does Paul say that he and the Philippians share in?

11. Explain the ways that we partner in the gospel with Paul, and with each other.

12. What impact might partnership in the gospel have on those we partner with?

13. Reflect for a moment on the way the Lord has worked in your life to bring you to faith and to keep you. What confidence does this give that he will carry that work to completion?

Knowing

Read Philippians 1:9-11

14. Often as Christians we will take Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 8:1 ('knowledge puffs up, but love builds up') out of context and say that too much knowledge is bad for Christians. What is Paul's prayer regarding knowledge and depth of insight here, and why does he think it's so important?

15. What opportunities has God put before you to grow in your knowledge and depth of insight? Have you taken them? Why/why not?

16. What are some practical ways your love could you grow more and more in your knowledge and depth of insight to help you stand firm until the day of Christ?

Pray

2. Suffering, rejoicing, remaining

Warm up: What kind of suffering have you experienced in your life (it can be small or great)?

Suffering

Read Philippians 1:12-14

1. We learn here that as Paul writes this letter he is a prisoner, under palace guard (v 13). We also learn from verse 12 that Paul is aware that the Philippians know about his situation and may be worried about him. As they worry for him and his imprisonment, what does Paul want them to know?
2. Paul says that he is 'in chains for Christ' in verse 13. What does he mean by this (see Acts 24:17-21 to help with your answer)?
3. According to verses 12 to 14, how has Paul's suffering served to advance the gospel?
4. Have you ever suffered (greatly or a little) for Christ? Why or why not?
5. Think about times you have suffered for any reason in your life (or perhaps your present suffering). How could your suffering serve to advance the gospel?

6. How could you help yourself to see your suffering as an opportunity to advance the gospel?

Rejoicing

Read Philippians 1:15-18

7. What two reasons does Paul say that people have for preaching Christ?
8. Unfortunately, rivalry and envy can often be the motivation behind church growth and the driving force for us as we seek to seem superior in our own Christianity and downplay the Christianity of others. Knowing this is happening, what does Paul rejoice in? What is he not endorsing here?
9. Often we are critical of other Christians for the things they say and do in the world, even if they believe in, and preach, the same gospel. How can we have a more joyous and less critical response to these brothers and sister?
10. When is it okay *not to* rejoice in someone preaching the gospel (see Galatians 1:8-9)?

17. Who might benefit from you remaining and living for Christ?

18. How can Paul's attitude here help us to see that for Christians, suicide isn't the better option?

Pray

3. The great tea bag

Warm up: Have you ever had a Christian in your workplace, family or class (other than yourself)? How were they perceived?

Read Philippians 1:27-30

1. Paul begins this section with the phrase, 'Whatever happens'. The context of this statement is Paul's discussion of his suffering. What he's saying is, 'Whatever happens – even if it is suffering'. What does he say his readers to do, 'Whatever happens'?

2. According to these verses conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of Christ is going to involve three things for the Philippians. What are the three things?

3. Paul says that the Philippians' unity in the faith and lack of fear will be a sign to their opponents. What kind of sign will it be, and why do you think this is the case?

4. Paul doesn't say that conducting yourself in a manner worthy of Christ involves being united for unity's sake. He says they should contend as one 'for the faith of the gospel'. He's wanting them to be united in persevering with and defending the gospel. Sometimes as Christians we think organisational unity is our goal (i.e. merging churches and denominations), but what do we learn here is the most important thing for us to contend for as one? How can we present a united front for the gospel without organisational unity?

5. Paul says part of the Philippians conducting themselves in a manner worthy of Christ involves suffering for Christ. Do you think we are also called to suffer for Christ? What are some examples of what this might look like for us?

Read Philippians 2:1-11

6. Paul is still talking about his readers conducting themselves in a manner worthy of Christ here. According to verse 1, what reasons do the Philippians have to change their conduct?
7. What kind of character is Paul calling his readers to in verses 2 to 4? Try to write it in your own words.
8. According to verse 5 the attitude of Paul's readers should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Paul then inserts what a lot of commentators think was a well-known hymn about Jesus. This hymn is like a tea bag dipped in the centre of the cup of Paul's letter. The character of Christ as described here infuses its way through the whole letter. From Paul's declaration in chapter 1:1 that he and Timothy are slaves of Christ to his thankfulness for the servant heartedness of the Philippians at the end of chapter 4, the letter is infused with the call to be like the Servant King. Describe Christ Jesus' attitude from verses 6 to 11 and describe *all* the consequences of his choice to conduct himself that way.
9. What things in your life are you doing 'out of selfish ambition'? How can you change your conduct here?

10. Consider the people you work with and go to church with. Do you think that you sometimes consider yourself better than them? How does this express itself? How can you change your conduct in this regard?

11. Consider *all* the consequences of Jesus' humility. How willing are you to experience those same consequences in your life for the sake of being humble like Christ?

Read Philippians 2:12-18

12. According to verses 12 to 13 what are the Philippians to continue to do and what confidence can they have as they do this?

13. How are 'complaining or arguing' the opposite of humility and conducting yourself in a manner worthy of Christ?

14. What word picture does Paul paint of the church that conducts itself in a manner worthy of Christ?

15. Paul and the Philippians had lots of reasons to grumble and complain. Yet, they didn't. Think back over the last week, when have you found yourself grumbling and complaining? How can you change your conduct for the week ahead?

16. The people of God are meant to shine like stars in the universe as we hold onto the word of life. How are you going with holding onto the word of life? What could help you with this?

17. We have a responsibility to continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but we need to remember it is God who works in us to will and to act according to his good purpose. How can we remind ourselves and comfort ourselves that God is working in us?

Pray

4. Honour people like them

Warm up: Who's been a great encouragement to you? How?

Read Philippians 2:19-24

1. Why does Paul hope to send Timothy to the Philippians soon?
2. According to verses 20 and 21, how does Timothy differ to everyone else?
3. How is Timothy's conduct a fulfilment of the kind of life Paul was calling his readers to in last week's study (see chapter 2:4-8)?
4. How has Timothy proved himself?
5. There's a noticeable intimacy between Paul, Timothy and the Philippians. This is an expression of the kind of unity Paul was talking about in chapter 1 verse 27 and chapter 2 verse 2. How would you describe your sense of intimacy and partnership with other Christians at church? How can you deepen this?

6. Consider the statement 'everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ'. How true is this for you? What would it look like for this not to be the case in your life - what would need to change?

Read Philippians 2:25-30

7. What practical expression of their partnership in the gospel have the Philippians show Paul according to verse 25?
8. In verses 26 and 27 we learn that Epaphroditus was so sick that he almost died. Despite that, he wasn't distressed over his sickness. What was he distressed about and what more do we learn here about the nature of the partnership between the Christians around Paul?
9. Why are the Philippians to honour and welcome men like Epaphroditus?
10. There are other believers and other churches in our town and our region. What are some of the ways we could practically express our partnership with them?
11. How could we grow in our heartfelt concern for one another at church?

12. Paul said to honour men like Epaphroditus. Are there people like Epaphroditus at our church and if so, what can we be doing to honour them?

13. Timothy and Epaphroditus are two really great examples of people conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. What changes may you be able to make to your life to follow their example?

Pray

5. Get rid of the rubbish and stand!

Warm up: What's something you're looking forward to at the moment?

Read Philippians 3:1-11

1. Paul consistently urges the Philippians to rejoice. What reasons does he give them to rejoice in this passage (see particularly verses 7 to 11)?
2. Sometimes as Christians we can feel discouraged rather than have the desire to rejoice. What things discourage us, and how can we replace that discouragement with rejoicing?
3. In verse 2 Paul urges the Philippians to watch out for the mutilators of the flesh. He's referring to those who were teaching that the marker that you belonged to the people of God was being physically circumcised. According to verse 3, what is the marker of being part of the true people of God ('the circumcision')?
4. How does Paul regard all of the things that used to give him confidence that he was one of God's people in verses 4 to 7?
5. How does Paul determine what is rubbish and what is not in his life now?

6. When Paul talks about somehow, or by any means attaining the resurrection of the dead (verse 11), he's not talking about earning it. He's talking about holding on to Jesus – continuing to follow him through suffering and death to life. What rubbish is there in your life that might be hindering you from holding on to Jesus to the very end?

7. How much do you value doing things and keeping things that help you to live for and hold on to Jesus? How is this expressed in how you prioritise your time and your money?

8. If you don't find yourself 'rejoicing' in the Lord, and you often feel discouraged and disconnected it may be that you're holding on to rubbish and not valuing things that help you to live for and hold on to Jesus. How could you change things in your life to lose things that take you away from Christ and value things that help you to hold on to him?

Read Philippians 3:12-16

9. What is Paul's attitude with regard to his salvation?

10. Does Paul think he is not yet right with God? OR does he think he is right with God, and now needs to persevere (see also chapter 2 verses 12 and 13)?

11. It seems clear from verse 16 that Paul is confident his place in God's kingdom has already been attained through his faith in Christ. He is simply saying that he wants to live up to what he has in Christ – or in other words, he wants to conduct himself in a manner worthy of Christ. How much are you straining toward/pressing on with/living up to what you have in Christ Jesus? What does this straining look like in your life at the moment?

12. Could you press on/strain/live up to Christ any more than you already are? How would you do that?

13. How can we help one another to press on with Christ?

Read Philippians 3:17-4:1

14. What very concrete advice does Paul give his readers in verse 17? How can we do this today?

15. What do those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ look like according to verse 19?

16. Are you concerned at all that this is describing you as an enemy of the cross of Christ? Is your mind on earthly things? Is your God your stomach? In what ways do you see yourself being ruled by your stomach or your desire for earthly things?

17. Many of the people in Philippi were infatuated with the worldly status of becoming a Roman citizen. Instead of worldly citizenship and worldly things, where ought the minds of Christians be focused (see v 20-21)?

18. How can we help ourselves to shift our focus from earthly things to heaven, the coming of the Lord and the glorious bodies that we have in store in Christ?

19. In your own words, write down how it is that we should stand firm in the Lord.

Pray

6. Peace and grace

Warm up: Have you ever met a Christian whose peace seemed evident to the world around them? Share with the group.

Read 4:2-3

1. Here we see there is a bit of conflict happening in the Philippian church between Euodia and Syntyche. What has Paul had to say about arguing and unity already in this letter (see 1:27; 2:2-8, 14)?
2. What reasons does verse 3 give for these women to be united?
3. Are you in conflict with any other believers? What steps can you take to bring about reconciliation?

Read Philippians 4:4-9

4. How does knowing Paul's context (1:13) help us to understand why he's so fixated on rejoicing?
5. When you are surrounded by the brokenness of this world it is incredibly difficult to rejoice. What instructions and reminders does Paul give his readers in verses 5 to 7 to ensure they can lift their eyes above their present suffering and rejoice in the Lord?

6. When we're going through a hard time, it can be difficult to be gentle. Usually we're aggravated and impatient in those times. In verse 5 Paul stresses the need to let our gentleness be evident to all. This is what Christ did when was on the cross – in fact he prayed for those who were mocking him. How are you at letting your gentleness be evident when things are tough? What are some practical steps you can take to help with your gentleness?

7. When things are hard, they consume our thoughts. Instead of being mentally consumed by our hardship Paul says in verse 6 we ought to by prayer and petition present our requests to God. How can we get into the practice of doing this?

8. Paul is literally in chains under palace guard (1:13). Yet, he doesn't dwell on his chains or his suffering, and in verse 8 he encourages the Philippians to do the same. What are they to dwell on?

9. When we are suffering, what steps can we take to help think about such things as those listed in verse 8 and to do such things as mentioned in verse 9?

Read Philippians 4:10-20

10. Paul rejoiced in the Philippians 'renewing their concern' for him (verse 10). It seems from the rest of the passage that they helped him out financially. This helps us to understand that when Paul says in verse 13 'I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength' that he's referring to enduring with, and being content with, not having much stuff. This is a good application of his instruction to the Philippians in chapter 2 verse 14 to do everything

without complaining. How content are you/would you be with not much stuff? Do/would you complain? Or are you/would you be content?

11. Paul says in verse 12 that he has learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. How might chapter 3 verses 17 to 21 and chapter 4 verse 8 help us to also learn that secret of how to be content?

12. It seems from verse 14 to 18 that the Philippians have been very generous in their partnership with Paul. People often go from that to verse 19 and say that Paul then tells the Philippians because they gave sacrificially God will make sure all their financial needs are met. But that is not what Paul is saying here. Paul is reminding them that as people who have given their lives to the gospel, who have put their faith in Jesus, they will have all their needs met *according to the riches in Christ Jesus*. In other words, God will meet their eternal needs, forgiveness, citizenship status in heaven and transformed and glorious bodies. God may also bless them financially, but he may not. It's absolutely possible that they could give money and not get that money back. How do you feel about giving sacrificially to support gospel work knowing that it may leave you in want physically, but that through faith you have all your needs met according to God's glorious riches in Christ (even if not financially in this life)?

13. How generous are you in your partnership in the gospel? What steps could you take to be more like the Philippians?

Read Philippians 4:21-23

14. These are Paul's parting words to the Philippians in the midst of his suffering and their suffering. He finishes with 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit'. The Lord has bestowed great grace upon us through the Lord Jesus. It gives us peace that transcends all understanding. The idea of it resting upon our spirits as we go about our lives reminds us of the promise of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28 when he tells them he will be with them always to the very end of the age. How can you remind yourself that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with your spirit as you go out into your week?

Pray