



PHILIPPIANS

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

SUMMER 2020

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How to use this digital study guide

This guide is best used digitally from your phone or tablet. If you'd rather have a printable workbook, visit providencefrisco.com/womens-resources. There are embedded links to resources throughout this guide to help you as you study. Before starting this study, you will need:

1. A pen and a journal
2. The book of Philippians (visit bit.ly/phil-text to read or print it)
3. This study guide and the Bible study bookmark

The Bible study bookmark walks through questions to help you grasp the overarching ideas of a particular book or chapter. For the sake of this study, we will primarily use the front side of the bookmark. You will use this every week so make sure you keep it handy.

Visit [our women's resource page](#) to download and print the Bible study bookmark. [It is also included at the end of this digital guide.](#)

Seeking to Understand the Background

When we study a book of the Bible, we want to get a high-level view. *This study begins by reading the entire book in one sitting.* Philippians can take anywhere from 15-20 minutes to read. We encourage you to listen to the Dwell app as you read. Once you've read through the entire book, use the bookmark to write observations on the book's setting, context, theme(s), and purpose to get a sense of the "big picture".

Throughout the study, you'll be prompted to look at each chapter using these same elements of setting, context, purpose and theme. This will help anchor you as you look verse by verse, keeping in mind the background of the book and the context of that particular chapter. You may not have new observations for all four categories but it helps to revisit throughout your study.

Note: For explanations of these study tools, [check out the appendix at the end of this guide](#). There are also examples on how to use these tools that might be helpful to you.

Study and Reflection Questions

After your overview work, you will have 2-3 sections of study questions to complete each week. If you prefer a daily study structure, each session can be studied over 5 days. You can do the chapter overview on the first day, three days of study questions, and the reflection questions on the last day. There are also some optional questions provided for further study if you want to learn more about a particular word, topic, or theme. The study guide was created to be flexible to however you study best.

Lastly, there is a reflection page at the end of each chapter so you can think back on what you've studied. Go through the reflection questions¹ and use them to inform your prayer and responses to the truths uncovered in God's Word.

[Click here to go back to the top of the guide](#)

¹ These questions are adapted from a book titled *Asking the Right Questions* by Matthew Harmon.

Philippians Resources

We hope these resources help you as you study God's Word. Click on the link to access these resources.

Dwell app

Listen to the book of Philippians

bit.ly/3cPod6w

Blue Letter Bible

Look up definitions, cross-references, and more

bit.ly/tools-phil1

Dictionary of Bible Themes

Passages and definitions categorized by theme

bit.ly/bible-themes

Spotify playlist

Worship playlist created specifically for this study

bit.ly/music-phil

The “Big Picture” of Philippians

Pray and prepare your heart each time you read God's Word.

Read all of Philippians and record observations.

Listen to the Dwell app as you read or read it aloud. The point of this exercise is to think about the main idea of the text as a whole and understand why this book was written.

Using the Bible study bookmark and your journal, record your initial observations under four headings: setting, context, theme(s) and purpose. [As you can see from the example provided in the appendix](#), these observations can be as simple as a few bullet points.

You may find it helpful to set aside some time to do this book overview before the study and build upon it as you study. It is okay if you leave some of this blank initially. Keep track of any questions you have and see if you're able to uncover the answers to these throughout the study.

Philippians 1 Study

Pray and prepare your heart each time you read God's Word.

Read Philippians 1 and record observations.

Re-read the first chapter before answering the following questions. Repetition will breed familiarity and will help as you study. Then record any new observations in your journal, using the front of the Bible study bookmark as a guide. We will revisit these questions at the start of each chapter.

Note: Look for additional setting elements, context clues, or themes that you see point to the author's purpose in writing this book. [You'll see an example of recording additional observations on a chapter in the appendix.](#)

After recording your observations, answer the following questions throughout your week. Make it a habit of re-reading the chapter each day you work through these questions.

Read Philippians 1:1-11.

How does the greeting in verses 1 and 2 remind us of our union with Christ?¹

All throughout the letter, we see that Paul rejoices because of his partnership with the Philippians and the gospel being proclaimed in and through them. What other partnership-type language do you see in this chapter?

Read Philippians 1:6 along with 2:12-13. What connections can you make between these verses? What basis does Paul have when he says that he is “sure of this” (v.6)?

How would you summarize Paul’s prayer for the Philippians? What does he focus on?

How might this passage shape your fellowship with other believers as well as your prayers for them?

¹ Visit bit.ly/theme-union to read verses about our union with Christ. Visit bit.ly/union-article to read more about this doctrine.

Read Philippians 1:12-18.

According to this passage, what has helped “advance the gospel”?

How does Paul describe those who are preaching in verses 15-17? What is the message being proclaimed? Does Paul take issue with this message?

What is your typical response when you are afflicted? What can you learn about Paul’s response to suffering?

Further study: What is the significance of the imperial guard mentioned in 1:13? Read more about it and see other places in scripture where this is mentioned.¹

¹ Visit bit.ly/phil-113 to read from Strong’s about the imperial guard.

Read Philippians 1:18b-30.1

What is the overall tone of this section? How does it reveal how Paul feels about the Philippians?

Read your Bible's footnote on 1:27 about an alternative translation.² How do both translations of the verse inform your understanding of Paul's intent in this section?

Where else in the letter does Paul mention the theme of citizenship? (Note: You can do a quick word search in blueletterbible.org or esv.org to find the reference.)

Why did Paul use the themes of partnership and citizenship in this particular letter? How would this be an encouragement to the Philippians in their circumstances?

How would you summarize this chapter?

How would you fill in the blank for this chapter? "Rejoice, because God is _____"

¹ 1:18b refers to the second part of the verse.

² If your Bible doesn't have this footnote, visit bit.ly/phil-127 to see it on Blue Letter Bible.

Further study: Paul encourages the Philippians to be unified in the gospel "and not be frightened in anything by your opponents" (1:28). Do you think these opponents are the same people mentioned in verses 15-18? What in the text supports this conclusion?

Philippians 1 Reflection

Pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

- What do we learn about God and how should we respond to God?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

- What do we learn about people and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *Ways people reflect God's character in the text*
- *Ways people reject God and his rule in the text*
- *How we should interact with and treat others*
- *Specific ways to love, serve, and care for others*

(Continued)

- What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

- What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?

Philippians 2 Study

Pray and prepare your heart each time you read God's Word.

Read Philippians 2 and record observations.

Read the chapter in one sitting, preferably multiple times with one of those times being out loud. Then record additional observations in your journal, using the Bible study bookmark as a guide.

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

Define humility in your own terms. Then look up the word's definition in a Bible dictionary¹. How does your understanding of humility align with the dictionary's definition?

Draw a diagram or illustration of Philippians 2:8-11. Use visual cues or symbols to represent the contrast of what Paul is describing about Christ. Identify the linking word² that connects the two ideas being contrasted.

¹ Dictionary of Bible Themes - definition and various passages on humility - bit.ly/define-humility.

² For more information on linking words, see the context section in the appendix.

In what other passages in scripture do we see humility and exaltation coexist?¹ What might this teach us about the character of God?

Read Philippians 2:12-18.

What's the main point of this section?

What does it mean to "work out your own salvation"?
How does verse 13 help give clarity to verse 12?

What linking word do you see at the start of this section?
What idea from the previous verses is being connected to this section?

Does knowing that God is at work in you compel you to obey and to rejoice? If it doesn't compel you, what would? Pray and ask God to bring about conviction, change, and joy that is only found in him.

What motivation is given for not grumbling or disputing? What benefit is there?

¹ Refer to previous page's link for passages on humility.

Read Philippians 2:19-30.

What is the relationship of Timothy and Epaphroditus to Paul? What information can you gather about how they partnered with Paul?

How do Paul and Epaphroditus respond to suffering and/or difficult circumstances? What can we conclude about how we can respond in our circumstances, both in sorrow and in joy?

Read over verses 1-18 again. Make a list of any correlations you see between verses 1-18 and 19-30.

How would you summarize chapter 2? If you could only choose one key verse to describe this chapter, which would you choose and why?

How would you fill in the blank for this chapter? "Rejoice, because God is _____"

Philippians 2 Reflection

Pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

- What do we learn about God and how should we respond to God?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

- What do we learn about people and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *Ways people reflect God's character in the text*
- *Ways people reject God and his rule in the text*
- *How we should interact with and treat others*
- *Specific ways to love, serve, and care for others*

(Continued)

- What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

- What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?

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Philippians 3 Study

Pray and prepare your heart each time you read God's Word.

Read Philippians 3 and record observations.

Read the chapter in one sitting, preferably multiple times with one of those times being out loud. Then record additional observations in your journal, using the Bible study bookmark as a guide.

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

Who is Paul referring to when he mentions dogs,¹ evildoers, and those who mutilate the flesh? What is Paul speaking against here?²

If you were to rewrite verse 5 and personalize it, what would you write? In what ways are you tempted to have "confidence in the flesh"?

What does it look like to "count everything as loss"?

¹ Isaiah 56:10-11

² Visit bit.ly/strongs-phil3 and click on the Strong's number next to each phrase to see how Paul uses these terms

According to this passage, where does our righteousness come from? How does this speak directly to the evildoers the Philippians are to look out for?

What does Paul “share in” as a result of his relationship with Christ? What does he gain?

Read Philippians 3:12-21.

Look at the descriptions of progress and endurance Paul uses in this chapter. Make a list of all the ways you see Paul challenging the Philippians to look forward. Next to this list, make note of the ways that Paul is calling them to put aside things that hinder this progress.

What encouragement is there as we fight sin? What is the prize?¹

When are you tempted to seek something other than this prize?

How are you encouraged by the fact that your citizenship is in heaven? How should this change how you live out your faith?

¹ Visit bit.ly/prize-phil314 to read the definition and use of the word “prize”

How would you summarize chapter 3?

How would you fill in the blank for this chapter? "Rejoice, because God is _____"

Further study: Identify ways that the themes of chapter 2 continue to develop in chapter 3. Make a chart of similar themes, words or ideas that you find in both chapters.

Philippians 3 Reflection

Pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

- What do we learn about God and how should we respond to God?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

- What do we learn about people and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *Ways people reflect God's character in the text*
- *Ways people reject God and his rule in the text*
- *How we should interact with and treat others*
- *Specific ways to love, serve, and care for others*

(Continued)

- What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

- What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?

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Philippians 4 Study

Pray and prepare your heart each time you read God's Word.

Read Philippians 4 and record observations.

Read the chapter in one sitting, preferably multiple times with one of those times being out loud. Then record additional observations in your journal, using the Bible study bookmark as a guide.

Read Philippians 4:1-7.

What is Paul contending for in verses 1-3? Where else do you see this in 4-7? What's the connection between these two smaller sections?

What makes it possible to not be anxious?

Draw a diagram or visual representation of verse 6. Look at the nouns and verbs used. Spend some time focusing on how Paul describes how we are to respond. What does he say to do when we are anxious?

Did Jesus address anxiety during his earthly ministry? If so, what did he say?¹

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines *peace*, as found in 4:7, as "the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is".² How does this impact how you read this verse? (Read also Colossians 3:15 and John 14:27.)

What does your prayer life look like right now? Do you struggle with making your requests known to God? Think about how it looks for you to practically live out verses 4-7 and ask God to help you as you seek him.

Further study: What does it mean that "The Lord is at hand"?³

¹ Do a word search on the word "anxious" or visit bit.ly/NT-anxiety for related cross references

² bit.ly/phil-peace

³ Visit bit.ly/at-hand to read the Vine's Dictionary on its definition and use in the Bible

Read Philippians 4:8-13.

Make a list of what is worth thinking about from 4:8. Is this list reflected in your own thought life? Do your thoughts drive you to praise God? What are some of the other things you are tempted to dwell on instead?

What benefit does Paul emphasize again in verse 9? How is it different than verse 7?

Philippians 4:13 is often a verse that is quoted outside of its original context. Read verses 10-13 again, as well as verse 14. What framework does this provide for verse 13? How does the letter as a whole inform how you understand this verse?

Further study: List some "out of context" verses that often receive an incomplete or incorrect interpretation, like Philippians 4:13. How would you teach a new Bible reader to use context and setting in their studies to arrive at an accurate understanding?

Read Philippians 4:14-23.

Philippians 4:14 can also be translated in this way: "Yet it was kind of you to have fellowship in my trouble".¹ In what ways do we see the Philippians share, or have fellowship in, his trouble?

In what ways does Paul benefit from his partnership with the Philippians? In what ways do the Philippians benefit from their service to Paul?

What connection can we make between Paul's joy and his circumstances? What does it look like to view our circumstances as he did?

The letter to the church in Philippi starts and ends in a similar manner. What does Paul appeal to in both his opening and final greetings?

(Continued)

¹ bit.ly/phil-414

Further study: Rejoicing in the Lord is mentioned multiple times throughout this letter, including chapter 4. Look up its definition and read other verses in the New Testament that mention rejoicing.¹

How would you summarize chapter 4?

How would you fill in the blank for this chapter?

"Rejoice, because God is _____."

¹ bit.ly/strongs-rejoice

Philippians 4 Reflection

Pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

- What do we learn about God and how should we respond to God?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

- What do we learn about people and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *Ways people reflect God's character in the text*
- *Ways people reject God and his rule in the text*
- *How we should interact with and treat others*
- *Specific ways to love, serve, and care for others*

(Continued)

- What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

- What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?

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Overall Reflections

How would you describe this book of the Bible to a friend? What kinds of life circumstances or struggles do you think would benefit from a deep study of Philippians?

Was there anything surprising you learned as a result of this study?

What stirred your heart for the Lord during your time in Philippians?

Share what you've learned with a friend, in particular the end of chapter reflections. Ask them to help you as you seek to be transformed by God and his Word.

What's next?

Use the study skills provided in this guide and the Bible study bookmark and choose another book of the Bible to study! If you are new to studying the Bible, a short letter like 1 John would be a great next book to study. Grab a friend to study with and to discuss what you are learning.

Appendix

1. *How to do a book or chapter overview*
2. *Book Overview example - 1 Corinthians*
3. *Chapter Overview example – 1 Corinthians 13*

How to do a book or chapter overview

Studying a text through the lens of its overall context is critical. The next four categories, though not exhaustive, are helpful to think through as you gain a general understanding of the book or chapter.

Setting

List important elements that pertain to the setting. If it's a letter, go to the first chapter - who is mentioned in the greeting? Who is the author talking to? Where are they – is it mentioned? Who does the author talk about throughout the book? If these elements are difficult to find within the text, consulting a good Study Bible's book introduction can help identify some of these elements. When studying a section within a book, identify what's happening in the text. Are there additional people, places, or significant events being introduced in the text? Keeping in mind the original setting and audience will help as you study.

Context

Look at what was written immediately before or after the text you are currently studying – this establishes the literary context. Refrain from reading the Bible as if it's an encyclopedia, with stand-alone entries that don't relate to one another. Instead, establish context by reading it like a novel. Recognize that verses aren't meant to be read in isolation but are only understood as a part of a paragraph, a chapter, a book, and the Bible as a whole.

As you establish literary context, look at how the text begins. Look for linking words, also known as transition words ("Therefore..." "Because..."). If there are linking words, what ideas are being connected? In the example in the following pages, reading just a few verses before and after 1 Corinthians 13 helps tremendously in understanding this passage. We see Paul continuing his train of thought, even though a new chapter has begun. Do this every time you read! It will soon become second nature to establish literary context anytime you study the Bible.

If you are starting a new book, seek to also establish historical context and look at the overall story and

timeline of the Bible. Reading a letter to the early church is very different than reading one of the prophets. It happens at a different time in history and the purpose of the writing is different. Context is king.

Theme

A book will have multiple themes throughout but will often center them around one major theme. Identifying key words (repeated words/concepts) will help point to themes. If you don't know if a word is considered a key word, think about what would happen if the word or idea was removed from the passage. Can you still get a sense of what the text is communicating? Since words can be translated or used in a variety of ways to communicate a point, use a resource like Strong's (found on blueletterbible.org) to find a word's original meaning and additional cross-references.

After spending time in a text, could you communicate the main point to someone? Sometimes crafting an overarching summary statement will help you to retain themes that you come across. Maybe you can create a list of important themes or concepts presented. Find ways, either visually or verbally, to understand the theme of the text. If the theme is difficult for you to pinpoint,

check out Bible Gateway's [Dictionary of Bible Themes](#). Looking at a list of themes throughout the Bible may help you to see them in your study. TGC has also produced [a series of theological essays](#) that cover a wide array of doctrines and topics.

Purpose

The theme and purpose tools work side by side. The theme is the "what" and the purpose is the "why". Once you've identified those key words in its original context, you will now have a better understanding of the author's overall purpose. Consider the author's purpose as the "Swiss Army Knife" that holds all other study tools together.¹ Any other study tool you use – reading different translations, looking up original languages, cross references – will all come back to the author's original intent.

Using an overview as you study verse by verse

When you come across a passage that is new to you or difficult to read, refer back to the author's purpose in

¹ *Dig Deeper*, pg. 30

writing the book. This will ensure that you're reading it in its original context first and foremost without unintentionally inserting a modern-day interpretation or bias. Doing the hard work of repetitive reading and crafting an overview will help in this.

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Setting

*Author,
audience,
and location*

Paul (1:1) wrote the letter to the church in Corinth (1:2)

Context

*How does
this book fit
within the
Bible
timeline?*

This letter is written after the death and resurrection of Christ in the life of the early church. Acts 18 shows Paul's experience in Corinth and the hostility toward the Gospel. It is one of two letters written to the church in Corinth.

Theme(s)

*Repeated
words
or concepts
throughout
the book*

- 1. Unity in the church*
- 2. Godly living + wisdom (vs wisdom from the world)*
- 3. The significance of the resurrection of Christ*

Purpose

*Why did the
author write
this?*

There are divisions in the Corinthian church (1:10) and Paul is sending them a letter addressing the issues causing conflict in the church.

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Chapter Overview

Example: 1 Corinthians 13

Setting

Any people, places, or events being introduced?

Same setting - Paul addressing the church in Corinth

Context

How does this connect to what was written before and/or after this passage?

In the previous chapter, Paul is talking to the church about spiritual gifts and how God has given gifts to each of us (12:27-28). The verse right before chapter 13 says we should “earnestly desire higher gifts” (12:31). In the next chapter, Paul seems to tie chapters 12 and 13 together, telling the Corinthians to “pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts” (14:1). Paul seems to continue a train of thought throughout these chapters.

Theme(s)

What key words are repeated?
What does the author focus on?

Key words:

- 1. Love (also translated as acting charitably)*
- 2. Tongues and prophesy (spiritual gifts)*

Purpose

Why did the author include this passage?

(Consider the chapter's themes within the book as a whole.)

Unity in the church is a theme throughout the letter and Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to let love be the driving force behind using spiritual gifts. He seems to emphasize tongues and prophesy (13:1, 13:8-10), maybe as gifts that he sees aren't being used in love.

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Studying God's Word



UNDERSTANDING THE BACKGROUND

Read for the big picture

- Read the entire book in one sitting, if possible. If it's a longer book, consider breaking it up over a few days.

Read repetitively

- As you study smaller sections within the book, read the passage multiple times. The more familiar it is, the easier it will be to understand and retain the content.

Ask the right questions

- Focus on questions that will help you understand the author's original intent and what the text ultimately says about God.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AS YOU READ

Setting

- Who wrote the book? Who is the audience? Where does it take place?
- Does the author introduce any people, places, and/or events as you read?

Context

- How does this book fit within the timeline of the Bible?
- How is this connected to what was written before and/or after this passage?

Theme(s)

- What repeated words or ideas do you see throughout the text?
- What's the point of what you just read? How does it point to the main theme of the book?

Purpose

- Why was this book (or passage) written? What was the author's original intent in writing this text?

GOING DEEPER

These questions will help you as you study verse by verse. After getting an overview of the text, use the following exercises to help you interpret what you are reading.

- Read the text thinking about how the original audience would have understood this text.
- Define words using a Bible dictionary.
- Look up cross-references, especially related to key words or themes.
- Read the same verse in 1 or 2 other translations to understand the meaning of a verse.
- Summarize or paraphrase what you just read in 1-2 sentences.



Use a Bible study website, such as blueletterbible.org, to access study helps like cross-references, translations and definitions.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

The aim is to let the truths of God's Word transform your heart. Answer these questions and pray that the Holy Spirit would convict and guide you.

What do we learn about God?

What do we learn about relating to God?

What do we learn about people?

What do we learn about relating to people?

What will these truths look like in action?

Are there practical steps to take?

What questions do I still have?

How will I investigate this further?

Recommended resources

- *Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin
- *Dig Deeper* by Nigel Beynon & Andrew Sachs
- *Asking the Right Questions* by Matthew Harmon