

SERVING WITH JOY

study Volunteer Guide



A 4-WEEK JOURNEY THROUGH PHILIPPIANS

How this Study Works

The Inductive Bible Study Method

This study uses a method called Inductive Bible Study. Do not let the name intimidate you. It simply means we let the Bible speak before we jump to conclusions. Each week you will move through three movements:

What does the text actually say?

Read the chapter slowly. Notice what is there. Who is speaking? What words repeat? What surprises you?

You are not interpreting yet. You are just paying attention.

Observe

What does the text mean?

Now ask why. Why did Paul say this? What was he trying to communicate? What was happening in his life and in the life of the church at Philippi?

Context is everything.

Interpret

What does this mean for my life right now?

This is where the study becomes personal. What does this passage ask of you? What belief does it challenge? What action does it invite? This is the step most studies skip. We will not skip it.

Apply



Group Size

4-6 volunteers per group



Weekly Reading

One chapter of Philippians before each gathering



Session Length

60 to 75 minutes



What to Bring

Your Bible, this guide, and honest Answers

One more thing before you begin:

Give yourself permission to be honest in these discussions. You do not have to have it together. You do not have to pretend Sunday mornings are always joyful. The goal is not performance. The goal is truth, growth, and the kind of joy Paul talks about, which is not the absence of hard things but the presence of something greater.

Grateful

Week 1

Joy grows where partnership is planted

Volunteers

BEFORE YOUR GROUP MEETS



Read Philippians 1 from start to finish this week. Try reading it in one sitting if you can. Then read it again more slowly, a few verses at a time.

As you read, circle or underline every time Paul mentions joy, rejoice, or thanksgiving. Pay attention to how many times these words appear in a letter written from prison.

WEEKLY APPLICATION

Write down the names of three people you serve alongside and send each of them a specific, genuine word of thanks this week.

Identify one thing about your volunteer role that you have been viewing as a burden. Ask God to help you reframe it as an opportunity.

Spend five minutes in prayer this week praying for your fellow volunteers by name. Pay attention to what you feel as you do it.

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."
Philippians 1:3-5 (ESV)

Observe

What does the text actually say?

1. Read verses 1 through 11 carefully. Make a list together of everything Paul is thankful for. What makes his gratitude unusual given his circumstances
2. Count the number of times some form of joy or rejoice appears in chapter 1. What does that pattern tell you about how Paul thinks?
3. In verse 12, Paul says his circumstances have actually served to advance the gospel. What happened to him? And what does he choose to focus on instead of what was taken from him?

Interpret

What does the text mean?

1. Paul describes his relationship with the Philippians as a partnership in the gospel. In the first century, that word partnership meant a deep, committed, shared investment. What does that tell us about the kind of community Paul believed was essential for joy?
2. In verse 6, Paul writes that he is confident God will complete the good work He began in the people he loves. This is a statement of theological trust. What does it cost to hold that kind of confidence in others, especially when you are carrying heavy circumstances?
3. Verses 27 through 30 tell the Philippians to stand firm together, side by side. In Paul's time, this language came from Roman military formation. Soldiers who broke ranks got each other killed. What does that image say about what it looks like to serve alongside other volunteers?

Apply

What does this mean for my life right now?

1. When you show up to serve, are you primarily aware of the people serving with you, or are you mostly focused on your own tasks? What would it look like to be more genuinely connected to your fellow volunteers?
2. Paul prays for the Philippians with joy. When you pray for this church and the people you serve with, does it feel more like joy or more like a to-do item? What do you think that reveals about your current season?
3. Paul chose to reframe his imprisonment as an opportunity for the gospel to advance. What difficult or draining part of your volunteer experience might God be using in a way you have not yet been willing to see?