

*Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies*

# **Philippians Bible Study**

## **“Genuine Love”**

Bible Studies  
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## **Philippians Bible Study**

### **“Genuine Love”**

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This book has been put together for your use:

- In your personal devotional Bible Study time.
- or
- For your Bible Study Discussion Group.

It is divided into several lessons, each lesson typically covers one chapter of the Bible book you are studying.

Each lesson has two (2) parts:

- Questions for you to Answer.
- My Comments and Thoughts.

I suggest answering the questions on your own before you read my comments on the passage. If you are studying as a group and not everyone has their own copy of this Bible Study, I suggest making sure each member of your group has a copy of the next week's questions in advance so that they can prepare if they want to. Preparation for a Bible Study is a great way to establish the habit of getting into the Word every day.

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An online version of this study is available for free download at:

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# *Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies*

## **Philippians Bible Study “Genuine Love”**

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## **Introduction “Genuine Love”**

*(Fill this out after reading or talking through Acts 16)*

**Background: Acts 16.** Paul started this church on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey, after responding to the “Macedonian Vision”. His first convert was \_\_\_\_\_. After she responded to the Gospel, her first act was to

\_\_\_\_\_, and then she \_\_\_\_\_.

Paul and \_\_\_\_\_ were imprisoned in Philippi, because they had commanded an evil spirit to come out of a woman, and her masters were angry that their source of \_\_\_\_\_ was gone. After they were imprisoned, about midnight, there was a great \_\_\_\_\_, and their chains were unfastened. But instead of running for their lives, Paul and Silas stayed, and witnessed to the jailer, who then \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus. When they finally were released from prison the next day, they went to the house of \_\_\_\_\_ and **encouraged** all the believers who were at her house, then they left Philippi.

As Paul writes this letter, we see him once again in prison (or, actually, under “house arrest”), this time in Rome. It is eleven years after Acts 16, and Paul has travelled extensively during that time, spreading the Gospel throughout the known world. He has not forgotten the little church he left in Philippi - his genuine love for them just shines like the sun in the pages of this letter.

The church at Philippi had not forgotten him, either. They had sent gifts to him again and again in the last eleven years as they heard of his needs in his travels.

In fact, they had just recently sent one of their own church leaders, Epaphroditus, to bring some gifts and check on him. They had heard Paul was in prison and were very upset that he was suffering. After checking on Paul, Epaphroditus returned to Philippi with this letter.

Here is how Paul starts this letter:

1. (:1-2) The Introduction

- Who was with Paul when he wrote this letter?

Timothy was with Paul in Rome when Paul wrote this letter to his friends in Philippi, but Timothy was not a co-author of the letter. The whole letter is from Paul himself.

- Who was Timothy?

From the NASB introduction to 1st Timothy, we learn these things about Timothy:

- He was a native of Lystra (located in what is Turkey today).
- His father was Greek, his mother was a Jewish Christian. (Acts 16:1)
- He had been taught the Old Testament from childhood. (2nd Timothy 1:5, 3:15)
- Paul called him “my true child in the faith” (1st Timothy 1:2), perhaps having led him to Christ during his first visit to Lystra.
- At the time of Paul’s second visit to Lystra, he invited Timothy to come with him on his missionary travels (Acts 16:3), and circumcised him so that he would not be a stumbling block as they ministered to Jews.

- Timothy traveled with Paul extensively in Macedonia, Achaia, Ephesus, Corinth, & Asia Minor. (Acts. 17:14-15, Acts 18:5, Acts 19:22, Acts 20:1-6)
  - Timothy was with Paul during his first imprisonment. (Philippians 1:1, Colossians. 1:1, Philemon 1)
  - Timothy stayed on in Ephesus at one point to Pastor the church there.
  - Timothy was the co-sender with Paul for six of his letters. (2nd Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians, and Philemon)
  - At the end of Paul’s life he requested Timothy to join him at Rome. (2nd Timothy 4:9,21)
  - According to Hebrews 12:23, Timothy was himself imprisoned and subsequently released.
  - Timothy was not an apostle.
- 
- Who is the letter written to?

To all the believers in the city of Philippi, and to all the leaders of that church. Why does Paul specifically address this letter to the leaders...the Pastors and deacons? Probably because they would keep this little church going, and would be the ones least likely to cave in to despair or discouragement. They would be the shining light for the ones they were leading.
  - How does Paul describe himself?

A bond-servant. One who has been set free, and then has willingly taken on the role of servant, wanting to serve his master more than have his freedom. This designation is particularly touching as we see in this first chapter the imprisoned Paul, acting like a free man. The servant Paul was happy to be where his Master, Jesus, had put him.
  - If Paul is a servant, how does that mean he regards his own needs & desires?

What is your opinion? Does a normal servant have worries about his own needs? Yes, sure. There is no guarantee that an earthly master will always be fair or kind. But did Paul need to have such worries? What did

Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount? (Matthew 6:25-34). A servant of God is in the business of the Kingdom of God, and the rules in that Kingdom are different than the rules for any other business on earth. There is no reason to spend any time fretting about personal needs and desires. The master takes care of those, as his servants go about doing His will.

Here are three questions you could ask yourself as you start Philipians:

1. Am I a bond-servant? Have I chosen to serve Christ with the rest of my life?
  
2. If I have made this choice, then am I concentrating on the task at hand and letting Jesus take care of my needs?
  
3. Do I have genuine love for the Christians who serve with me in this ministry of spreading the Gospel?

## ***“How to Pray” Questions for you to Answer***

### *Philippians 1*

- On your own, pace yourself this week and answer of a few of the following questions each day.

1. (:1-8) Paul’s relationship with the Philippians
  - How does Paul feel about the Philippians?
  - Why does he feel that way?
  - Who do you pray for?
  - Is there anyone you pray for who brings joy to you just at the thought of them?
  - Is your prayer life where you want it to be?



- What would you change?
  - Who is on your regular prayer list?
  - What do you pray for the people on your list?
2. (:9-11) What are the 4 things Paul prayed for the Philippians?
- 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.
3. (:12-18) Paul explains his current situation.
- What has happened to Paul?
  - What are the negatives from what has happened to Paul?
  - How does Paul use this difficult situation to encourage the Philippians to whom he is writing? In other words, what are the positives?

- Is Paul using the “power of positive thinking”...or is he really rejoicing? Is there a difference?

4. (:19-20) What does Paul expect to happen?

5. (:21-26)

- Even though Paul is rejoicing, where would he rather be?
- Why is he convinced that he will be staying around for awhile?
- Are our lives well-spent if others benefit from our life, but it seems that we don't?

6. (:27-30)

- Does Paul assure them that they will not have to suffer as he has?
- What is Paul's heart's desire for them?
- Why is Paul's suffering an encouragement to the Philippians?

7. In what way should your prayer life change as a result of Philippians chapter 1?

8. Make a prayer list. Divide it into two columns. What did this chapter teach you about how to pray for the people God has placed in your life?

<b>Those who don't know Christ personally</b>	<b>Those who do know Christ personally</b>
Names	Names
How to pray for them:	How to pray for them:

## ***“How to Pray” Answers***

### ***Philippians 1***

1. (:1-8) Paul’s relationship with the Philippians.

- How does Paul feel about the Philippians?

He is very fond of them. The thought of them brings him joy. Remember, Paul was basically chased out of Philippi. He was put in prison, and his jailer was in charge of beating him and intimidating him. But his jailer is one of the people he writes to now. Paul has genuine love for this jailer, he is one of the people who bring him joy as he thinks of them.

- Why does Paul feel this way?

How can this be? Only through the miracle of the Holy Spirit living inside believers. Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost comes to live inside him, and that person now has a common bond with other believers which jumps right over the top of any barrier which might have been there before.

When He was still on earth, Jesus told His followers: “A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this will all men know you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34&35)

What is definite proof that we have begun our new life with Jesus? We have a love for other believers which defies explanation. They may not deserve it. We may not deserve it. It’s just as natural as the first gasp of breath from a newborn baby. It is a sign of life.

2. (:9-11) What are the three things Paul prayed for the Philippians?

1. :9 That their love (for Christ and for each other) would grow. That the more they know, the more they understand, the more they will love. Interesting, isn't it? Sometimes people avoid letting people know them really well, because they are afraid they will be loved less once they are truly well-known. But the love one believer feels for another is only enhanced by knowledge. Yes, we see one another's flaws....sometimes we see them only too clearly. But that gives opportunity for knowing Christ better, as we seek to sometimes forgive, sometimes challenge, or sometimes be patient with one another....and that gives the open door for genuine love to grow.

2. :10 The NASB version gives the best idea of where you should go with this verse: Paul is praying that his beloved Philippians would understand and do the “best” or “excellent” things in their lives, so that the rest of the world would see them as sincere and blameless until the Day Christ returns. Are they going to be perfect? No. Unfortunately they will still sin and make mistakes. But if they are always looking for the best path, the most excellent way of doing things, in other words, God's way of doing things, they will be seen as genuinely loving and living for Christ in the eyes of a the world around them.

What would be “best”, therefore, or “excellent”? It could be just as simple as knowing when to move forward with a project at church, for example, or when to wait until everyone involved is ready to move forward. Our natural instincts might tell us that if everyone isn't ready, that's their problem. But God's ways are different. God's ways would tell us to be patient...to consider the person more important than the project.

3. :11 And then he prays that his readers will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. I picture a

cornucopia full of good fruit when I read this. He wants his readers to be overflowing with good works. Good deeds. Good decisions. Good actions.

Isn't it interesting to note what Paul does not pray for his readers?

- ✓ He does not pray that they will be healthy.
- ✓ He does not pray that they will have good jobs.
- ✓ He does not pray that they will not have problems
- ✓ He does not pray that they will have more things.
- ✓ He does not pray that they will have easy lives.

That isn't to say that any of the above things are wrong to pray for. But it should make us pause and ask ourselves what are the most important things to pray for? 1. More love for other believers. 2. Discernment to do the best things. 3. Bringing forth much fruit. Those are the top priorities in our prayers.

3. (:12-18) Paul explains his current situation.

- What has happened to Paul?

He is in chains. Imprisoned. He is under house arrest in Rome, chained to a guard, but living in his own rented home, able to receive visitors there. The picture is one of Paul, chained to a guard for six hours, then chained to another guard for the next six hours, etc. Round the clock jailers in Paul's house.

- What are the negatives from what has happened to Paul?

He can't leave Rome and visit his churches. He is chained. Some people out in Rome are pleased he is jailed, and are using his circumstances to torment him.

- How does Paul use this difficult situation to encourage the Philippians to whom he is writing? In other words, what are the positives?

First of all, he can't leave Rome and visit his churches, so he stays right where he is and writes them letters. Those letters were preserved, and have become a huge part of the New Testament, to encourage and guide believers for the last two thousand years.

Next, he is chained. That means that four guards a day got a chance to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. How much would you give to have four chances a day to witness?

Finally, some people are taunting Paul with the fact that he is in prison for preaching about Jesus. But it turns out that even that is a good thing. For every time they tell the world how foolish it is for Paul to believe in Jesus, they are re-telling the story of Jesus, and whether they believe it or not, others are hearing the good news.

4. Is Paul using the “power of positive thinking”...or is he really rejoicing? Is there a difference?

He's really rejoicing. He's not just being positive....he's seeing things the way God sees them. Things are really great!

5. (:19-20) What does Paul expect to happen?

He expects to either live or die. But either way he expects God's name to be exalted and the Gospel to be spread.

6. (:21-26)

- Even though Paul is rejoicing, where would he rather be?

He would rather be with Jesus.

- Why is he convinced he will be staying around for awhile?

He's pretty sure he won't be going home to Jesus just yet, because the need in the churches is still so great – he sees that he is still needed to further the work of God.

- Are our lives well-spent if others benefit from our life, but it seems we don't?

The obvious answer is yes. The difficult part of this is that sometimes we may get discouraged. If we do, we should read Philippians chapter 1. There is no better example of a Christian who looked like a failure in the worlds' eyes, but was a shining star in God's eyes.

#### 7. (:27-30)

- Does Paul assure them that they will not have to suffer as he has?

Absolutely not. In fact, he guarantees that suffering for Christ is normal, and is a gift.

- What is Paul's heart's desire for them?

That they will spend themselves spreading the Gospel.

- Why is Paul's suffering an encouragement to the Philippians?

They can keep doing what they know God would have them do, and know that even imprisonment is a blessing when the Gospel is being spread.





## ***“How to Get Along” Questions for you to Answer***

### *Philippians 2*

- On your own, pace yourself this week and answer of a few of the following questions each day.

1. (:1) In verse 1, Paul assumes the Philippians already have four very important things happening in their relationship to Jesus. What are they?
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -
2. (:2a) And since these four things are already in their lives, what one other characteristic does Paul want to see them display?

3. (:2b-5) He goes on to explain what that means. He mentions six things which are a part of being “like-minded”....what are they?
- - 
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -
4. (:3) How is it possible to consider others better than myself when it seems obvious they aren't? *(I may not say this out loud, but I sometimes do feel that way.)*
5. (:4) Does this verse mean that I should always put everyone else's needs ahead of mine? Is that even possible?
6. (:5-8) When Jesus became a servant and died a humiliating and horrible death...did He put everyone else's needs ahead of His?
- ☐ What about when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple?
  - ☐ What about when He left the crowds who were asking for Him so that He could be alone?
  - ☐ What about when He chose to leave a city and go to another even though people were clamoring for His attention?

7. (:9-11) What was the end result of Jesus' humility?
8. (:12-13) What if I find it impossible to do this?
9. (:14-16) What is one sure way I can be visible to the world as a believer?
10. (:17-30) Paul closes this chapter with a few comments about two fellow-servants who are close friends of his. What do you see in these verses which indicate Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditis are “walking the talk”?



## ***“How to Get Along” Answers***

### *Philippians 2*

1. (:1) In verse 1, Paul assumes the Philippians already have four very important things happening in their relationship to Jesus. What are they?
  - They are encouraged because they are united to Christ. In other words, when they came out of their darkness, and finally had a relationship with Jesus, they could not help but be encouraged as they compared their past life with their present
  - They are comforted with His love. Every day they get to experience the soothing and comforting fact of His love simply given to them, over and over.
  - They have fellowship with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence within them, and they get to have a give and take relationship with Him all day long. They listen to His urgings. They let Him know when they need help walking by faith. It's a friendship. A relationship. Fellowship.
  - They have experienced tenderness and compassion from the Lord, Jesus. Tenderness and compassion from the Holy

Spirit. Tenderness and compassion from God the Father. And they have given tenderness and compassion out to others, of course, because it is now such a part of their lives.

2. (:2a) And since these four things are already in their lives, what one other characteristic does Paul want to see them display?

He wants them to be like-minded with one another. Does this mean they are being told to always agree with one another? No. Disagreement is not wrong. In the next question, we'll look more closely at verse 2, and then also at verses 3,4 & 5, where Paul goes on to explain exactly what he means

Why does Paul have to urge them to do this? I'm guessing, but maybe it's because he has heard that there are people in the Philippian church who are not sure how to get along – not sure what God requires in a church for people relationships.

- 3 . (:2b-5) He goes on to explain what that means. He mentions six things which are a part of being “like -minded”....what are they?

- a. When Christians are like-minded, they know they all have the same love. They've all been loved equally by God, and they've all been given the same love from the Holy Spirit to spread out to each other. They have the same love, so they are like-minded.
- b. And also, they know they are “one”, in spirit (all have the same Holy Spirit)
- c. Likewise, they know that every single believer in Jesus Christ has the same purpose. We are told to go and tell the

story of Jesus. We may do it in different ways. We may have diverse backgrounds and goals for our personal lives. But our one, huge, over-riding goal is the same. All of us have a God-given desire to tell people about Jesus. That makes us like-minded.

- d. They are to consider others better than themselves. No room for selfishness here.
- e. They need to be intentional about looking not only to their own interests, but also looking to other people's interests as well. No one lives in a bubble. Other people's lives touch each other. Look out for the other guy. (yes, of course take care of yourself..but don't stop there.)
- f. They need to have the same attitude Jesus had. (what was that attitude? You'll see in verses 5-8.)

Now....why did Paul have to tell them to do these things? If the Holy Spirit was living within these believers, wouldn't He just remind them and teach them and change them? Wouldn't that change just happen automatically as each of these Christians walks with Him through life?

Yes. And no. Yes, the Holy Spirit does grow us and change us as we walk with Him. But we all do have a sinful nature which is still with us after we come to belief in Jesus. That sinful nature can tell us lies. We need to consistently hear the truth of the Word of God so that we can be constantly correcting the wrong messages we receive from ourselves and from the world we live in.

That's why none of us can declare ourselves independent from other Christians. We need each other for encouragement and support and for that



occasional prod when we begin to look and act again like the dark, dark world we came from.

4. (:3) How is it possible to consider others better than myself when it seems obvious they aren't ?

Back to verse 3 again. If we are honest we will admit that there are people out there in that big, bad world, who we're pretty sure are not as "good" as we are. There. I've said it. It's out. It's obvious, right? Nope. Not according to these verses. The bum on the street or the rapist, or the murderer, or the lazy guy on the corner who won't even look for a job....all of them are better than me.

What? How can that be? I know I'm not perfect, but I've come to faith in Christ and my life is so much better than it used to be. I've changed. I'm cleaner. I love people more. I serve in the church. I tell people about Jesus. How can a sinner, unclean, and loving his sin be better than me?

Have you figured it out yet? All the things you are – the good things, the improved things, the acts of love and service, the attitudes of compassion....all of it....is the result of what God has done in your life. None of it.....absolutely none.....is because of you.

You're not better than anyone. You've just been given gifts. You didn't earn them. You are not worthy of them. The fact that you feel better than that other guy is only proof that you're not.

Now – how do you feel about the bum on the corner?

5. (:4) Honestly, does this verse mean that I should always put everyone else's needs ahead of mine? Is that even possible?

No, that's not what it says, is it? It says that I *should* look out for my own needs and interests, but *also* I should look out for the needs and interests of others. And that doesn't mean, either, that I should always give everyone else all the things they want. That's the lazy person's way to fulfill this verse. Sometimes the things others want are

not the best things for them. So the directive here is to take the time to get to know the other person. To care about what’s best for them. And to be a part of the solution for the other person’s needs, if you can.

If the other Christian is always at the bottom of the financial barrel, maybe as I get to know them I will find that what they need is a little less “give so they can have what they want”, and a little more accountability for making good money decisions. Maybe. Maybe not. The only way to find out is to get to know them. To enter into their life enough to walk with them through the tough times, but not necessarily being their savior from their bad decisions. Maybe the help they need is aid in knowing how to look for a job, instead of information on a nearby Food Pantry.

You probably get the picture here. If I am looking out for another’s interests, I am first seeking wisdom from God to know what kind of help is needed. What kind of help is welcomed. What kind of help is really help.

6. (:5-8) When Jesus became a servant and died a humiliating and horrible death...did He put everyone else’s needs ahead of His ?

- ☐ What about when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple?  
(John 2:13-22)
- ☐ What about when He left the crowds who were asking for Him so that He could be alone? (John 6:15)
- ☐ What about when He said and taught things which drove people away from Him?  
(John 6:60-66)
- ☐ What about when people were searching for Him and He didn’t have time to see them? (John 12:20-26)
- ☐ What about when religious leaders asked Him questions and He didn’t always give them the immediate answers they wanted? (John 10:22-30)

The answer is yes, He did put everyone else's needs above His. He did that by laying aside the glory and comfort and beauty that was His in heaven, and becoming a human being for a short time. He did it by putting Himself into the hands of sinners and becoming vulnerable to all the shortcomings and evils of those sinners.

He did it by giving genuine love and respect to those whom He knew would fail Him (like Peter, who denied Him 3 times at the end of His life).

But what He didn't do was give everyone exactly what they asked for all the time (as in the instances cited above). He always chose to do the best thing...and often it wasn't the thing being demanded or asked for or expected. Why didn't He do as they wanted always? Because He knew what their real needs were – and those were the needs He met.

7. (:9-11) What was the end result of Jesus' humility?

Because Jesus took the road of suffering and humility, because He did what was best instead of what was being demanded, because He genuinely loved instead of just looking like He did, Jesus was and will be ultimately honored far above every person who ever lived.

God the Father gave Him that honor – and some day God the Father will make sure every person who ever lived will kneel before Jesus and honor Him. Some will kneel whether they like it or not, having lived lives full of hatred and rejection of Him. Some will kneel because their hearts are full of awe for Him. But all will kneel. And every single tongue will speak the truth at that moment: Jesus Christ is very God Himself. Those who never did want to admit that truth in their lifetimes will still utter the words – they will not be able to stop themselves. The truth will overpower them. But for them it will be too late, because those words will not be uttered by choice, in love for Jesus. They will have missed their chance to choose to believe in Him.

8. (:12-13) What if I find it impossible to do this?

In other words, what if I realize I should have the attitude of Jesus, and be humble and loving and wise about other people's needs – but I also realize I just don't have it in me to be like Jesus?

If you realize that, you are in good company. No one on earth has the ability to be like Jesus. So...how do we do it? Does God still expect it? Yes, He does. And the only way to do it is to day-by-day come to Jesus and ask Him to change us to be more like Him, admitting freely that we can't do it on our own.

When verse 12 says “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” it is talking about precisely this impossible situation. We are to be like Jesus. But we can't. We are to be humble. But pride is strong. We are to love. But hate comes easier. So we “work it out”. We keep coming, every day, every hour, every minute if necessary, to Jesus, and admitting our inability and asking for the miracle of Him changing us to be more like Him.

And He will. He does. Verse 13 tells us that when we do this, God Himself works inside of us to not only do the right thing, but also to want to do the right thing. “To will and to do...”.

Our only hope in living this Christian life is to admit we can't. And ask for a miracle.

9. (:14-16) What is one sure way I can be visible to the world as a believer?

Do all things in your life without complaining or arguing with anyone. Really? I mean...that, too is impossible!

Correct. It is. Same solution. Admit you can't. Ask for a miracle.

When you live through the good and bad of life with an attitude of thankfulness to God for the very privilege of being His servant, no matter what comes, then the world sees your life and is in awe of it. They will have their eyes

opened to the absolute miracle of living life the way it was always meant to be lived: full-out trust in God.

10. (:17-30) Paul closes this chapter with a few comments about two fellow-servants who are close friends of his. What do you see in these verses which indicate Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus are “walking the talk”?

In verses 19-23 Paul talks about Timothy and says of him: *“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus, but you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the Gospel...”* (:21&22) Yes, Timothy was “walking the talk”.

And then in verses 25-30 Paul talks about Epaphroditus. He says of this man who came from Philippi to specifically check on Paul, at the request of the Philippian church: *“...since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”* (:26) Yes, Epaphroditus was “walking the talk”.

Are you?

If not, why not start right now being more concerned about the others in your life who also love the Lord? Why not start right now putting others’ needs first? Why not start now admitting to Jesus that you can’t do this task He has asked you to do....and that you will never make it to the finish line unless He takes over and changes you on the inside?

## ***“Our Common Goal” Questions for you to Answer***

### *Philippians 3*

- On your own, pace yourself this week and answer of a few of the following questions each day.

1. (:1-6) What did Paul used to have confidence in?
2. (:7-8) How does he look at these things now?
3. (:9) What does Paul put his confidence in now?
4. (:10) What did Paul know would be a part of this different way of thinking and living?

5. (:11) What was Paul looking forward to – stretching towards – his goal?

6. (:12-14 )Does Paul consider himself to have “arrived” at this goal?

7. (:15-16) What does Paul think “mature” Christians will do?

What do you think of when you think of a “mature” Christian?

8. (:17-4:1) What are the three things Paul tells them to do, as believers who are pressing toward a goal?

- Follow \_\_\_\_\_
- Take note of \_\_\_\_\_
- Stand \_\_\_\_\_ (see 4:1)

## **“Our Common Goal” Answers**

### *Philippians 3*

If any Christians have ever lived in a time where people are more confused about what their goals in life should be, I'd like to know when that time would have been!!! Look at the goals we are told we should have:

- Lose weight.
- Dress right.
- Have lots of friends.
- Be in good physical shape.
- Be able to retire someday.
- Live in the right neighborhood.
- Drive the right car.
- Kids in the right schools.
- Have the right job.
- Keep your job.
- Eat right.
- Exercise right.
- Vacation.
- Relax – don't have stress.

But look at Ephesians 4:17-19. Do we realize that the culture telling us to have these goals has:

- Futile thinking.
- Darkened understanding.
- Separation from true life.
- Ignorance.
- Hardened hearts.
- No sensitivity.
- Sensuality.
- Impurity.
- Lust for more.

We're supposed to be different!!! What is our common goal? For Christians, what's really most important in life?



*Let's see what Paul told the Philippians about the things our world considers most important:*

1. (:1-6) What did Paul used to have confidence in?

Paul starts out these six verses, basically, with his conclusion. What is it? After all is said and done in this chapter, the thing we can be most sure of is that we have reason to rejoice in the Lord!

All the other things we might have rejoiced in at some other point in our life don't matter now. They just aren't worth rejoicing about. What's worth rejoicing about is the Lord Himself. Jesus is the Lord. He exists. He has reached out to us and communicated with us. He has paved the way for us to communicate with Him. He has wiped the slate clean. He is everything we need for life and happiness. He is worth rejoicing about.

So what did Paul used to rejoice about...before Jesus?

- He was someone important.
- He was circumcised (on the 8<sup>th</sup> day – very important).
- He was of good stock – pure Jewish.
- He was of the tribe of Benjamin – he knew his ancestry.
- He was high up in the opinion of other people just like himself – Hebrews.
- He was a Pharisee – a defender of the law of Moses.
- He was extremely zealous for the Lord and for Judaism. He didn't cut any corners or ever let down his guard.
- He persecuted the church – the enemies of Judaism.
- He followed every precept of the law. Yes, of course, he had transgressed the law now and again, but he always made the appropriate sacrifice, just like the law said to do.

2. (:7-8) How does he look at these things now?

None of these things matter anymore at all to him! Just to know Christ makes the loss of reputation, or loss of freedom, or loss of safety, or loss of health no big deal. He

has Jesus. He has everything. All the pride he used to have in himself and in his accomplishments is over. Gone.

3. (:9) What does Paul put his confidence in?

He knows now, as a believer in Jesus, that the righteousness he so longed for was all along not something he could earn. He longed to be in the presence of God, but knew that he must be pure to be in God's presence. He tried for all those years to do the all the right things, and get the best education...but that never made him pure...it always fell short of pure. Only as he learned of the sacrifice of Jesus, and placed his faith in Jesus, not in himself, did he get the righteousness he so longed for. The righteousness of Jesus was given to him as a gift. Just for the believing.

4. (:10) What did Paul know would be a part of this different way of thinking and living?

He knew suffering would come as a result of believing in Jesus.

5. (:11) What was Paul looking forward to – stretching towards – his goal?

His goal was seeing the face of Jesus someday. His goal was being resurrected from the dead himself. His goal was heaven.

6.(:12-14 )Does Paul consider himself to have “arrived” as a believer?

No, he hadn't “arrived” in the sense that he was perfect in this world. He still sinned. He still doubted. He still got depressed when things were tough.

If he hadn't “arrived”, then how does he deal with his shortcomings?

He forgets all that went before. He keeps moving forward towards the goal.

What goal is Paul heading toward?

The upward call. The moment when Jesus calls him home.

7. (:15-16) What does Paul think “mature” Christians will do?

Paul knows that any believer in Jesus who is grown up in the faith will also have that same goal: heaven. Seeing the face of Jesus. The end of this life and the beginning of the life that really counts.

What do you think of when you think of a “mature” Christian?

A mature Christian is not one who simply has gone to church for a long time, or who is living a moral, upright life. Those are good things, but they are not the most important sign of a mature Christian. The most obvious and important sign of a true Christian is their goal in life.

8. (:17-4:1) What are the three things Paul tells them to do, as believers who are pressing toward a goal?

- Follow Paul’s example.
- Take note of others who are like Paul.
- Stand fast in the Lord.

## **“Genuine Love” Questions for you to Answer**

### *Philippians 4*

- On your own, pace yourself this week and answer a few of the following questions each day.

After Paul has told the Philippians what his overwhelming purpose is for his life, he winds up at the end of Chapter 3 by urging them to join him in this purpose, and to “stand firm” in verse 1 of chapter 4.

And then, in the rest of Chapter 4, he gives his closing “list” of final instructions... instructions for being the best church they could possibly be.

What is in his list?

1. (:2&3)
  - How does “harmony” differ from “unison”?
  - What is the “book of life”? Ps. 69:28, Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8

2. (:4)
  - What is the key to rejoicing when things are not going well?
3. (:5)
  - Why should we be gentle?
4. (:6)
  - What keeps us from being anxious?
5. (:7)
  - Can we experience God's peace even when we don't understand it?
6. (:8)
  - What does it mean to “dwell” on something?
  - What should I dwell on?
7. (:9)
  - Is paul saying: “I'm perfect, so just follow my example and you'll be perfect, too.”?

8. (:10-19)

- What was Paul rejoicing about?
- Is Paul mostly glad because he needed something and got it?
- What is the secret of being filled or going hungry?
- Who profits the most from giving?
- Is Paul satisfied with his life?
- Will God provide for our needs from the scrapings at the bottom of the barrel?

9. And now he says his good-byes. (:20-23). What are the three parts of his good-byes?

1. A prayer for the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
2. Greetings from one \_\_\_\_\_ to another.
3. A prayer for the \_\_\_\_\_ of God



## **“Genuine Love” Answers**

### *Philippians 4*

After Paul has told the Philippians what his overwhelming purpose is for his life, he winds up at the end of Chapter 3 by urging them to join him in this purpose, and to “stand firm” in verse 1 of chapter 4.

And then, in Chapter 4, he gives his closing “list” of final instructions... instructions for being the best church they could possibly be.

What is in his list?

1. (:2&3)

- How does “harmony” differ from “unison”?

“Unison” means every person is doing the exactly same thing. “Harmony” means you are doing different things, but are complementing each other.

Euodias and Syntyche are urged to work in harmony. In other words, “Go ahead and be yourself. Be different than your friend. But recognize your commonality and go for the same goal, even if it is in different ways. If you do that, you will make beautiful music...something which is a joy to hear for those out in the world who desperately need beauty.

- What is the “book of life”? Psalm 69:28, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8

The Book of Life is God’s book. A book in His keeping where a person’s very own name is recorded when they become fully “alive”. When they believe in Jesus and are



part of eternal life. It’s a book which will never be erased. The names are not recorded when a person dies and goes to heaven, but rather when a person is alive and believes in Jesus. Life begins at that moment, and never ends.

Why does Paul bring up this book of life in the same context with two women who are being urged to work together in harmony? I think as they realize both of their names are written in this eternal book, they know they are going to spend forever together – so give up on hurt feelings or arrogance in the here and now – focus on forever.

2. (:4)

- What is the key to rejoicing when things are not going well?

Rejoice in the Lord. Not in circumstances. Not in other people. Not even in yourself. Rejoice simply in the Lord. His name. His reputation. His promises. His record of keeping promises. His love. His grace.

3. (:5)

- Why should we be gentle?

Because people are watching how we respond to our worst moments in life. Almost anyone can be sweet and gentle when all is going well, but are we going to be like most everyone else and take out our problems on others? Or are we going to be gentle, understanding, gracious, understanding, calm – in the midst of life’s difficulties? The choice is ours.

4. (:6)

- What keeps us from being anxious?

I have a favorite lullaby which is taken from these verses:

*“Don’t you worry about anything  
Instead, pray about everything.  
Tell God what you need,  
And thank Him for what He has done.*

*And the peace of God,  
Far beyond what we can understand,  
Will keep your heart  
And your mind  
In Christ Jesus.”*

(CD: Hidden In My Heart Volume I - The Peace of God)

I wish you could hear the melody – it is sweet and lilting – very calming. Just like these verses.

5. (:7)

- Can we experience God’s peace even when we don’t understand it?

Now this is good news. We don’t have to understand God in order for Him to work in our lives. We don’t have to understand peace in order to feel it. Nice.

6. (:8)

- What does it mean to “dwell” on something?

Think about it and put other thoughts out of your mind.

- What should I dwell on?

Beautiful and wonderful things. Not just spiritual things, you know? I mean, not just Bible verses. Maybe lilies. Or storm clouds over the mountains. Paul is telling us to fill our thoughts and words with all the good things He has given us. And there is so much!

7. (:9)

- Is Paul saying: “I’m perfect, so just follow my example and you’ll be perfect, too.”?

Paul is not being arrogant. He is honestly saying that following his actions would be a good plan because He is following Christ.

8. (:10-19)

- What was Paul rejoicing about?

That the Philippian church had been generous givers – the very thing Jesus Himself would have done.

- Is Paul mostly glad because he needed something and got it?

No – mostly he is so happy they had the joy of giving.

- What is the secret of being filled or going hungry?

Knowing that whatever happens, the strength of Jesus will be how we go through it. Our own strength may not take us through very many hungry mornings, but Christ’s strength will.

- Who profits the most from giving?

The giver.

- Is Paul satisfied with his life?

Oh, yeah.

- Will God provide for our needs from the scrapings at the bottom of the barrel?

No! God provides from the very best. He provides from His own rich storehouses. I love that thought. The only way to own this truth is to walk through a time when we desperately need God’s provision....and then see what He does. And I will tell you from experience that He doesn’t always do it fast. That’s where waiting comes in for Christian growth: *“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31.*

9. And now he says his good-byes. (:20-23). What are the three parts of his good-byes?

1. A prayer for the glory of God.
2. Greetings from one believer to another.
3. A prayer for the grace of God

So ends this sweet love letter from Pastor Paul to his beloved Philippians. He displays his genuine love for them with no apologies, and then tenderly shows his genuine gratitude for their love for him. He very much wants them to learn to genuinely love each other.

We live in a world where love is not often genuine. And especially we live in a world when love between Christians is sometimes shamefully non-existent. But, in this letter, Paul lets us look at love – and long for it.



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