

Weekly Study Guide

March 26, 2017

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The Philippian Cross-life

Things I'd like to remember about today's message...

Daily Readings

Monday

Philippians 1:1-11

Thursday

Philippians 3:1-14

Tuesday

Philippians 1:12-30

Friday

Philippians 3:15-21

Wednesday

Philippians 2:1-30

Saturday

Philippians 4:1-23

Regular habits of private Bible reading strengthen our relationship with God and teach us how to follow Jesus. In addition to the thematic exercise above, you can use this guide each week to lead you through relevant sections of the Bible.

Group Discussion Guide

CONNECT

You don't know what trust is until you completely let go. Share an experience you had, either with a person or with God, where you completely 'let go'. What did you learn?

LEARN AND APPLY

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we see the Philippian church had been suffering from persecution.

Read Philippians 1:27-30. What kind of struggles might you imagine the church was having? Take a moment as a group to pray for Christians who are facing these kinds of trials today.

Living in a situation where your faith is constantly being put to the test is hard. It results either in your faith growing stronger or giving up and turning away. Paul's letter answers this context with needed encouragement for those who are facing suffering for their faith.

Read Philippians 1:12-18. What is Paul's situation in this passage? What is Paul's attitude around his situation of suffering? What do you think gives him the ability to hold this perspective?

The greatest encouragement Paul can give to the church, whether they are in a time of suffering or joy, is to remind them (and us) who the Lord is! Those whose lord is Caesar seek to climb and grasp power that, in the end, will go nowhere. Those whose Lord is Jesus seek to go low in order to bless and, as a result, will know suffering, but also will be lifted higher (by God) than anyone could ever climb!

Read Philippians 2:1-11. According to this passage (sometimes called the Christ Hymn), what did Jesus give up, and why did he do this? How might verses 9-11 be a response to what was given up in verse 6? What does this tell us about God?

Suffering and hardship are found in every faithful life—Paul, the Philippians, even Jesus himself. But the Cross is not the end of the story; it's the beginning of the revealing of God's power and Jesus' glory. Our God chooses to be present in the midst of the suffering of the world in order to bring us with him - into a new ending. How does the glorious resolution of Jesus' situation, after his costly obedience, speak hope to our own experiences of suffering?

Read Hebrews 2:17-18. What does this verse reveal about why Jesus came, and why he entered into suffering?

Read Philippians 2:8 and Mark 15:34. It has been said, "to be human is to face the question of suffering without a satisfactory answer." No matter what you believe about how God will redeem suffering, when in it, it only feels like we've been abandoned. In his love for us, through Jesus, God chose to experience even this. What does that tell you about God?

The second issue of context that comes up in Philippians has to do with an interpersonal issue between two leaders in the church. Paul uses the cross of Jesus to model what it looks like to be followers of a LORD who chooses to serve rather than exalt himself. How then, are we to live as followers of this Jesus?

Read Philippians 4:1-3. What do you imagine might be going on here? With this audience in mind, **read Philippians 2:1-5** again.

- What is going on in our hearts when we have a hard time valuing others?
- Where do jealousies and desire for recognition come from in us?
- What do you think 'having the mindset of Christ' means when it comes to being in relationship with others?

Note: What this is NOT. This call to love sacrificially can only be answered when we know our infinite value to God. This call is not to devalue yourself or dislike yourself (that would be an insult to the God who loves you!), but to choose to honor your neighbor by giving of yourself through love. Jesus didn't choose to humbling himself to serve out of lack of self-esteem, but out of the overflow of God's love. True self-sacrifice can only be made out of freedom and love, not out of obligation, and certainly not out of a lack of self-worth. If you find yourself serving others because you genuinely feel they are better than you are—that's a spiritual problem! No one on Earth means more to God than you do, and no one on Earth means less to God than you do! But since Jesus, our Lord, in love, chose to act in a way that honored others more than himself, we find that knowing his love leads us to live this way too.

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia with some advice on how to relate to each other as Christian brothers and sisters. **Read Galatians 6:1-5.**

- Describe the balance you see here between being responsible for yourself, helping others, rebuking others, having proper pride in yourself, and keeping your pride in check.
- Do you see a difference between what is considered a 'burden' and a daily 'load'?
- What insights into a life of cross-carrying discipleship did God give you today?

PRAY AND APPLY

Pray today for those who have burdens in their lives that are too heavy for them to carry alone. Pray they may feel the arms of Jesus around them and that we, as the people of God, may be moved to help carry those burdens. Pray also that God would show you if there are burdens you are carrying that you should ask someone else to help you carry in prayer.