

2025-8-3



A publication of  DISCIPLE, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- ① From Sunday's sermon, what did you **like best**, or what **caught your attention most**—and **why**?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Let's see how the church in Philippi got started. Turn to Acts 16 and discuss these seven questions:
 - According to v. 5, how well was the ministry going?
 - Then what happened in v. 6-8, and then in v. 9-10?
 - Google "Bithynia". In which direction did they plan to go? In which direction did God turn them?
 - As bewildering as the events of v. 6-8 were, how do you think Paul felt in v. 11-15?
 - After the encouraging event in v. 11-15, what happened in v. 16-24?
 - After the bewildering events of v. 16-24, how do you think Paul felt in v. 25-36?
 - Finally, why do you think Paul reacted as he did in v. 37-40?

How would you have felt in each of these situations?  

- ③ From where did Paul write Philippians and how did he feel about it (see Philippians 1:12-18)?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- ④ What do the **circumstances** of Acts 16 teach you about **God's** values and priorities?
- ⑤ What do Paul's **actions** in Acts 16 teach you about **his** values and priorities?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Which of God's values and priorities delight you—**and why**?
- ⑥ Under which of God's values and priorities do you chafe—**and why**?
- ⑦ Which of Paul's priorities and values do you **currently** share? Give evidence for your conclusions.
- ⑧ What changes do you need to make in order to submit more fully and joyfully to God's values and priorities?
- ⑨ What changes to you need to make in order to adopt Paul's values and priorities to a greater degree?

❶ This is just a starter question. Enjoy it, but don't spend too much time on it.

❷ –According to v. 5, the ministry going **very well**, and **we** would have been 😊.

–In v. 6-8 Paul hit a roadblock, and **we** almost certainly would have felt 😱.

then in v. 9-10 Paul understood that God was redirecting him, and **we** again would have felt 😊.

–“Bithynia” is to the north north-east but God turned them westward.

–In v. 11-15 Paul realized that God a new, fruitful field for his labors. **We** again would have been 😊.

–In v. 16-24 opposition arises and Paul is thrown into prison. We **certainly** would have felt 😱!

–In v. 25-36 Paul learns that his time in prison was so that the jailor could be saved. We're 😊 again.

–In v. 37-40 Paul insisted on official, open recognition of his innocence so that the reputation of the gospel would not be besmirched in any way.

❸ Paul wrote Philippians from prison—and that in no way reduced his joy! And, our joy should not vary. Paul was, taking a page from Pastor Dan's distinction between “**normal**” (ie, “setting the standard”) and “**average**” (ie, “in the middle”), Paul, although a fallen human being (and therefore an “average human”) evidenced the epitome of Christian behavior, and therefore Paul was the **normal** Christian! As he said in Philippians 3:17 “Brothers, join in **following my example**, and look for those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”

❹ God desires for all men to be saved, so even though the ministry was fruitful in Asia Minor, God led Paul to venture into Europe. Then, he desired for a jailor and family to hear the gospel, and so he engineered circumstances to get Paul arrested.

❺ Paul desired maximum fruitfulness for his Lord. He labored hard. He took advantage of every opportunity, and when he hit a roadblock, he trusted God's redirection. He rejoiced in suffering.

❻ Think through your own answers to these questions so that you can guide your group to honest reflection.

❼ Ditto.

❽ Ditto.

❾ Ditto.

Sermon Summary

Today we are beginning a study of Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. My goal is to give you an overview of the book—who wrote it and who were the original recipients of the letter.

Author Paul is the stated author of this letter and very few scholars have questioned his authorship over the years. Of course he includes his friend Timothy in the initial greeting.

Recipients As the opening verses reveal, this letter was written to the Church located in the city of Philippi which is located in modern day Greece. Luke, the author of the New Testament book of Acts, tells us that Philippi was a Roman Colony and was regarded as “a leading city of the district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12). We know that its inhabitants were Roman citizens, who had the rights not only to vote, but also to govern themselves. Roman colonies were very progressive in that way. There was no Jewish Synagogue in Philippi. It is called Philippi after King Philip of Macedon who ruled from BC 359-336.

In October of 42 BC, the armies of Octavius and Antony were victorious, and Philippi became a Roman military colony with all of the rights and privileges afforded to such a colony. Over the years Philippi grew in prominence because it was strategically situated on the main road which led from Rome to the province of Asia. It is called The Egnation Way.

Date and Location of Writing & Establishment of the Church It seems most likely that this letter was written from Rome around AD 62. We know from the New Testament book of Acts that Paul, along with Silas, Timothy and Luke, founded the church at Philippi during his second missionary journey. It is a fascinating tale as most church planting adventures are. Paul and Silas left from Jerusalem and traveled north through Syria and Cilicia.

They came to the towns of Derby and Lystra. According to the New Testament book of Acts, it was there that Timothy joined the group. For reasons known only to God, the group was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia, and so they came to the city of Troas. While in Troas, Paul had a vision. In that vision, there stood a man from Macedonia appealing to Paul and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Being one to recognize the obvious, Paul determined that God must want them to evangelize the Macedonians, and so they left for the Macedonian city of Neapolis the day following this vision. From Neapolis, they traveled to Philippi where we are told that Luke was waiting to join them in ministry.

Acts 16 records their arrival in Philippi (Acts 16:13-34). The church in Philippi began with a prayer meeting by the river where Lydia and her household responded to the gospel message Paul had preached. Most works of God begin in a prayer meeting! While in prison, God effected a jailbreak through an earthquake. In the aftermath, a Philippian jailer and his entire family came to faith in Christ! From all of that, we can surmise that Lydia's family and this jailer's family served as the nucleus for this new church.

Over the years, Paul maintained close contact with the Philippian church. We also know that the Philippian church sent financial gifts to Paul on at least two occasions during his ministry at the nearby church located in the city of Thessalonica.

Background Behind the Letter to the Philippians

1. Paul was imprisoned in Rome for his faith.
2. News of his imprisonment comes to the Philippian church.
3. They send a man named Epharoditus to learn of Paul's status firsthand, and to bring Paul a monetary gift (4:10,14-18) for his sustenance and ongoing ministry from prison.
4. While ministering on Paul's behalf in Philippi, Epaphroditus becomes deathly ill.
5. Somehow, the church at Philippi hears this news about Epaphroditus' poor health, which creates a new concern for them (2:26-27,30).
6. Epaphroditus discovers the church's concern for him, and this news in turn burdens him (2:26).
7. God heals Epaphroditus, and Paul sends him back to Philippi with this same letter we are studying which caused the Philippian church to rejoice at his return (2:27-28).

Purposes for this Letter

1. Paul wanted to relieve their anxiety over the circumstances of his imprisonment (1:1-30).
2. Paul wanted to address a growing disunity in the church and so he wrote to appeal to them to manifest humility and unity (2:1-8).
3. He wanted to inform them of Timothy's imminent visit (2:18-24).
4. He wanted to explain the reasons behind Epaphroditus' sickness and healing (2:25-30).
5. He wanted to warn them against the deceitful tactics and doctrines of a heretical group he referred to as Judaizers (3:1-4:1).
6. He wanted to admonish two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to maintain spiritual unity (4:2-3).
7. He prescribed truth that would give them stability to replace their anxiety (4:4-9).
8. He wanted to thank them for their past financial assistance (4:10-20).
9. He wanted to express greetings to the entire church family (4:21-23).

Application/Challenge—see the “*Digging Deeper*” feature.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

In preparation for our study, I would like for you to read straight through the book of Philippians at least three times this week. As you read, ask yourself these questions:

What do I learn about Jesus?

What do I learn about the Philippian church? How would I describe it to someone else?

What do I learn about Paul's circumstances and how he responds to them?

What does Paul care about? Do I care about those things?

