

# **Paul's Koinonian Example: How Christians Share a Mission That Transcends Circumstances- Philippians 1:12-20**

Paul's letter to the Philippians offers a powerful example of how believers can maintain their mission even in the most challenging circumstances. Writing from a Roman prison cell, Paul demonstrates that Christians are united by a shared mission that transcends age, circumstances, location, and any other barriers we might imagine.

## **What Does It Mean to Have a Shared Mission?**

The concept of shared mission is the second part of biblical fellowship, which is called koinonia. While the first part involves sharing our lives openly and vulnerably with others, the shared mission aspect means working together toward the same God-given purpose. Paul illustrates this beautifully as he writes to the Philippians from his prison cell, showing that physical separation doesn't diminish spiritual unity when believers share the same mission.

This shared mission isn't optional for some Christians while others get a pass. Every believer, regardless of their circumstances, is called to participate in advancing the Gospel. Paul makes this clear when he says his imprisonment has "actually advanced the Gospel" rather than hindered it.

## **How Can Difficult Circumstances Actually Advance the Gospel?**

Paul's perspective on his imprisonment reveals a crucial truth about how God works through our difficulties. Instead of complaining about his unfair treatment or asking for prayers to change his situation, Paul celebrates how God is using his circumstances to reach new people with the Gospel.

The Imperial Guard, also known as the Praetorian Guard, represented Rome's most elite military unit. These were men who were typically unreachable with the Gospel - the kind of people you would avoid on the street, not approach with a message about Jesus. Yet Paul's imprisonment gave him daily access to share the Gospel with these very men.

This teaches us that we all have unique groups of people in our lives that God has positioned us to reach. Whether it's neighbors, coworkers, classmates, or fellow community members, God has strategically placed us where we are for missional purposes.

## **Why Do We Make Excuses for Not Sharing Our Faith?**

## **Loving the Mission Removes Our Excuses**

Paul could have had countless excuses for not engaging in evangelism while imprisoned. He was literally chained to Roman soldiers and restricted in his movements. Yet he didn't make excuses - he preached all the more.

Common excuses we make include being too young or too old, too busy, having kids, not knowing where to start, or thinking evangelism isn't our gifting. However, there is no valid reason for a follower of Jesus to avoid engaging in the mission Jesus gave us. It might look different for each person, but we should all be living out the mission in some way.

*Circumstances don't disqualify us from mission - they simply change how we engage in it.*

## **Fear of Rejection Versus Love for Others**

One of the most common fears that holds Christians back from sharing their faith is the fear of rejection or changing relationships. However, if we truly believe what Jesus said in John 14:6 - that He is "the way, the truth, and the life" and that "no one comes to the Father except through me" - then not sharing the Gospel with friends and loved ones means we're allowing them to continue on a path toward eternal separation from God.

Loving the mission is ultimately about loving the people God has brought into our lives. Taking a step of boldness to share Jesus with someone is one of the most selfless, serving things we can do for them.

## **What Happens When People Have Wrong Motives for Ministry?**

### **The Problem of Jealousy in Ministry**

Paul addresses a group of people who were preaching Christ but for the wrong reasons. They were motivated by envy, rivalry, selfish ambition, insincerity, and a desire to cause trouble. Essentially, they were jealous of Paul's God-given calling and wanted the recognition he received.

This reveals an important truth: God has a unique calling on each of our lives (Ephesians 2:10). When we become jealous of others' roles or ministries, we miss our own God-designed purpose and damage the unity that should characterize Christian fellowship.

### **The Importance of Humility in Shared Mission**

Koinonia requires humility. We must understand that we're not the superstars of the Great Commission - Jesus is. Our role is more like supporting players who help get Jesus "the ball" by

investing in people, inviting them into our lives, involving them in our walk with God, and igniting their own passion for the mission.

When everyone thinks they're the star player, the team fails. But when we humbly play our roles while keeping Jesus as the focus, we can experience true fellowship and see the mission advance effectively.

## **How Should We Respond When Others Succeed in Ministry?**

Paul's response to those preaching from wrong motives is remarkable. Instead of arguing with them or trying to correct their methodology, he rejoices because "Christ is proclaimed." He doesn't try to build Paul's kingdom - he builds God's kingdom.

This kingdom mindset should inspire us to rejoice when God is working, whether it's happening through us, around us, or through someone else. We should celebrate when other churches are growing, when other Christians are effective in evangelism, and when God is moving in ways we might not be directly involved in.

## **What Does It Mean to Honor Christ in Everything?**

Paul's ultimate desire, expressed in verse 20, is simple yet profound: "Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death." He wants to honor God in every conversation, every interaction, and even in his death if it comes to that.

This echoes the prayer of St. Patrick, who prayed for "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me" - essentially asking that people would see Jesus in every aspect of his life rather than seeking his own comfort or reputation.

The key question for us is whether our motivation for living out the shared mission is bringing glory to Jesus or bringing glory to ourselves. Man's praise is temporary and fading, but faithfully serving God and seeing someone give their life to Jesus has eternal value.

## **Why Isn't the Mission Really About Us?**

Often, we view the Great Commission as optional because we think it's ultimately about us. We reason that since we're already saved, we don't need to bring the Gospel to others. But our motivation for making disciples shouldn't be ourselves - it should be making Jesus' name great.

The mission begins with our personal relationship with God. If we don't know Jesus personally, there is no mission to have. But once we've surrendered our lives to God, we're given a new mission that's really about God and about other people.

God has positioned each of us strategically, just as He positioned Paul in Rome, to reach specific people effectively with the Gospel. For most of us, this starts with our immediate neighbors - the people living closest to us, whom God has placed in our path.

## **Life Application**

This week, commit to praying for your eight closest neighbors using the "BOB" method: pray for Burden (that your heart would break knowing that you may not see them in heaven), Opportunity (that God would open doors for conversations and ways to love them), and Boldness (that when God gives opportunities, you'll be quick to seize them).

Take the initiative to actually engage with your neighbors. When you see them, don't just invite them to church - take time to love them first. Ask how their day is going and if there's anything you can do to help them. Remember, it takes no special skill to love your neighbor, no special gift to care about them, and no perfect speech to invite them to church or community events.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- Do I truly love the mission Jesus has given me, or do I see it as just another obligation?
- What specific excuses have I been making for not engaging in evangelism, and how can I surrender these to God?
- Am I motivated by a desire to see Jesus glorified, or am I seeking recognition and praise for myself?
- Who are the specific people God has strategically placed in my life that I need to begin praying for and reaching out to?

# Our Shared Mission- Small Group Discussion Guide

## Summary

Paul writes from a Roman prison cell, demonstrating how his imprisonment has actually advanced the Gospel rather than hindered it. He shares how he's been able to reach the elite Imperial Guard and how his boldness has encouraged other believers to share the Gospel more fearlessly. Paul addresses those who preach out of jealousy and rivalry, showing that his focus remains on Christ being proclaimed regardless of others' motives. The passage reveals that Christians are united by a shared mission that transcends age, circumstances, and location, calling believers to love the mission enough to remove their excuses and focus on honoring Christ in every situation.

## Intro Prayer

Father God, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us through Your Word. Help us to be receptive to Your Spirit's leading and to see clearly how You are calling us to live out the mission You've given us. Remove any distractions or preconceived notions we may have, and help us to approach this time with humility and eagerness to grow. We pray that our discussion would honor You and draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Ice Breaker

What's one thing you've been excited to share with others recently - maybe a new restaurant, movie, book, or hobby?

## Key Verses

1. Philippians 1:12-20
2. John 14:6
3. Ephesians 2:10
4. Job 13:15-16

## Questions

1. Paul found ways to advance the Gospel even while imprisoned. What circumstances in your life might you have viewed as obstacles to ministry that could actually be opportunities?
2. Paul mentions that some people were preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry. How can we guard against wrong motivations in our own service and ministry?
3. One of our application points from Philippians 1:12-20 was that 'loving the mission removes our excuses.' What excuses do you find yourself making for not engaging in evangelism or

discipleship?

4. Paul rejoiced that Christ was being proclaimed regardless of others' motives. How can we develop this kind of kingdom mindset rather than focusing on our own recognition?
5. The passage emphasizes that Christians are united by a shared mission regardless of age, circumstances, or location. How have you seen this unity in action in your own life or church?
6. Paul wanted Christ to be 'highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.' What would it look like for Christ to be magnified through your daily life and circumstances?
7. Pastor Daniel challenged us to pray for our neighbors and take initiative in reaching them. What practical steps could you take this week to engage with your neighbors or community?
8. How does understanding that 'the mission isn't about us' change the way you approach sharing your faith or serving others?

## Life Application

This week, identify your 'eight neighbors' - the people who live closest to you - and commit to praying for them daily. Take one practical step to engage with at least one neighbor, whether that's introducing yourself, offering help, or simply having a conversation to show you care about them as a person.

## Key Takeaways

1. Christians are united by a shared mission regardless of age, circumstances, or location
2. Loving the mission removes our excuses for not engaging in evangelism and discipleship
3. Koinonia requires humility - we are not the superstars of the mission, Jesus is
4. Our motivation for ministry should be bringing glory to Jesus, not seeking recognition for ourselves
5. The mission is ultimately about loving others enough to share the Gospel with them, not about our own comfort or reputation

## Ending Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Paul and his unwavering commitment to the Gospel mission even in the most difficult circumstances. Help us to examine our own hearts and motivations, and give us the courage to remove any excuses that keep us from fully engaging in the mission You've given us. Fill us with Your love for the people around us - our neighbors, coworkers, friends, and family members who need to know Jesus. May our lives magnify Christ in every situation, and may we find our joy not in recognition from others, but in seeing Your kingdom advance. Give us boldness to take initiative this week and love those You've placed in our path. We surrender our lives to You and ask that You would use us for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.



# Our Shared Mission- Daily Devotions

## Day 1

### Chains Can't Stop God's Plan

**Devotional:** Sometimes life doesn't go according to our plans. We face unexpected setbacks, difficult circumstances, or situations that seem to derail our purpose. Paul found himself in a Roman prison cell at one time, chained to guards and under house arrest at other times; far from where he thought he should be. Yet instead of complaining or giving up, he discovered something remarkable: God was using his imprisonment to advance the Gospel in ways he never imagined. The very guards assigned to watch him became his captive audience for the Gospel. These elite soldiers, who would never have stepped foot in a synagogue or listened to a traveling preacher, now heard about Jesus every single day. What seemed like a dead end became a divine appointment. Your current circumstances might feel limiting or frustrating. Maybe you're stuck in a job you don't love, dealing with health challenges, or facing financial constraints. But what if God is positioning you exactly where you need to be to reach people only you can reach? Your workplace, your neighborhood, your current season of life - these aren't accidents. They're assignments. God specializes in turning our setbacks into setups for His glory. When we surrender our circumstances to Him, He can use even our most challenging moments to advance His kingdom in unexpected ways.

**Bible Verse:** 'Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ!' - Philippians 1:12-13

**Reflection Question:** What current circumstance in your life could God be using as a strategic opportunity to reach others with His love?

**Quote:** Christians are united by a shared mission, regardless of age, circumstance, location, or anything else.

**Prayer:** Lord, help me see my circumstances through Your eyes. Use even my challenges to advance Your kingdom and reach people I couldn't reach otherwise.

## Day 2

### Your Unique Mission Field

**Devotional:** Every believer has been strategically placed by God to reach specific people that others cannot. Paul's imprisonment gave him access to the Imperial Guard - an elite group that was completely unreachable through traditional ministry methods. These hardened soldiers became his daily mission field, hearing the Gospel through his example and words. You have a similar unique mission field. It might be your coworkers who see your integrity during stressful projects, your neighbors who notice your kindness during difficult seasons, or your classmates who observe your character when no one else is watching. These relationships aren't coincidental - they're divinely orchestrated opportunities. The beauty of God's design is that He places each of us in circles of influence that perfectly match our personalities, experiences, and circumstances. The single mom in your apartment complex might relate to your struggles in ways she couldn't with anyone else. Your colleague going through a divorce might be more open to your encouragement because you've walked that path. Instead of waiting for the 'perfect' opportunity to share your faith, recognize that God has already surrounded you with people who need to see Jesus through your life. Your current relationships are your primary mission field. The question isn't whether you have opportunities to impact others for Christ - it's whether you'll recognize and embrace the ones God has already given you.

**Bible Verse:** 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.' - Ephesians 2:10

**Reflection Question:** Who are the specific people in your daily life that God might be calling you to reach with His love and truth?

**Quote:** We all have a unique group of people that we get to reach every single day. What an opportunity!

**Prayer:** Father, open my eyes to see the mission field You've placed around me. Give me wisdom and courage to love the people You've brought into my life.

## Day 3

### Love Removes Excuses

**Devotional:** When we truly love someone, we'll do whatever it takes to help them. A parent will sacrifice sleep to care for a sick child. A friend will drive across town to offer support during a crisis. Love motivates us to act, even when it's inconvenient or costly. Paul understood this principle deeply. His love for people drove him to share the Gospel regardless of his circumstances. Prison couldn't stop him because his motivation wasn't comfort or convenience - it was love for souls who desperately needed Jesus. Too often, we let excuses keep us from sharing our faith. We tell ourselves we're not qualified enough, don't know enough Scripture, or aren't in the right circumstances. But these excuses crumble when we truly grasp what's at stake. If we believe that Jesus is the only way to eternal life, then our silence isn't just a missed opportunity - it's withholding the most important news someone could ever hear. Loving the mission means loving the people around us enough to step out of our comfort zones. It means caring more about their eternal destiny than our temporary discomfort. When we see our friends, family members, and neighbors through God's eyes - as people He loves desperately and died to save - our excuses lose their power. The most loving thing we can do for someone is introduce them to Jesus. Everything else we offer them is temporary, but the Gospel offers eternal hope.

**Bible Verse:** 'Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' - John 14:6

**Reflection Question:** What excuses have you been using to avoid sharing the Gospel, and how might love for others help you overcome them?

**Quote:** Loving the mission removes our excuses.

**Prayer:** God, fill my heart with Your love for the people around me. Help me see past my excuses to the eternal needs of those You've placed in my life.

## Day 4

### Humble Teammates, Not Superstars

**Devotional:** In every great team, there's usually one standout player who gets most of the attention and credit. But championship teams know that everyone has a role to play, and success comes when each player embraces their part rather than trying to be the star. Paul understood this perfectly when it came to God's mission. Even as an apostle who planted churches and wrote much of the New Testament, he never forgot that Jesus was the true superstar of the Gospel story. Paul saw himself as a role player - important, but not the main attraction. This humility is crucial for effective ministry. When we try to make ourselves the hero of someone's spiritual journey, we get in the way of what God wants to do. Our job isn't to be impressive or to have all the answers. Our job is to point people to Jesus and let Him do the transforming work. Sometimes God will use us directly in someone's life. Other times, He'll use us to plant seeds that others will water, or to water seeds that others planted. We might never see the full fruit of our faithfulness, but that's okay. Our role is to be obedient, not to be the star. When we embrace our role as humble teammates in God's mission, we can celebrate when He works through others just as much as when He works through us. The goal isn't our glory - it's His kingdom advancing and people finding hope in Jesus.

**Bible Verse:** 'Even if he kills me, I will hope in him. I will still defend my ways before him. Yes, this will result in my deliverance, for no godless person can appear before him.' - Job 13:15-16

**Reflection Question:** How can you embrace being a humble 'role player' in God's mission rather than trying to be the superstar?

**Quote:** There is a superstar of the Great Commission, It's Jesus. Jesus is the superstar.

**Prayer:** Lord, keep me humble and focused on Your glory, not my own. Help me celebrate when You work through others just as much as when You work through me.

## Day 5

### Honoring Christ in Everything

**Devotional:** Paul had one driving desire that shaped every decision, every conversation, and every moment of his life: that Christ would be honored. Whether he lived or died, succeeded or failed, was praised or persecuted, his goal remained the same - to bring glory to Jesus. This kind of single-minded focus transforms how we approach our daily lives. Instead of asking 'What's in it for me?' we start asking 'How can this honor Christ?' Instead of seeking our own comfort and success, we look for opportunities to display His character and advance His kingdom. When honoring Christ becomes our primary motivation, it changes everything. Our work becomes worship. Our relationships become ministry opportunities. Our challenges become chances to demonstrate faith. Even our failures become testimonies of God's grace and forgiveness. This doesn't mean we become perfect or never struggle. Paul faced plenty of difficulties and disappointments. But his consistent focus on honoring Christ gave him perspective and purpose that transcended his circumstances. As we grow in our faith, this should become our increasing desire too. Not just to be blessed by God, but to be a blessing that points others to Him. Not just to receive His love, but to reflect it to a world that desperately needs to see Jesus. When Christ is honored through our lives, we find the deep satisfaction that comes from living according to our true purpose - bringing glory to the One who gave everything for us.

**Bible Verse:** 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.' - 2 Timothy 4:7

**Reflection Question:** What would change in your daily life if your primary goal was to honor Christ in everything you do?

**Quote:** Paul just wants to honor God. In everything that he does, in every conversation, in every part of his life, in every interaction, and even in his death, he wants to honor God.

**Prayer:** Jesus, make honoring You the driving force of my life. Help me live in a way that points others to Your love and grace.