

A PHILIPPIANS STUDY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

November 12, 2023

PHILIPPIANS week 9 - Woody Morwood

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your most preferred mode of communication; phone call, text message, email, letter, etc...?

Does your preference change depending on the subject? If so, how?

➤ EXPLORATION

For the past several weeks we have been studying the first two chapters of Philippians which is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi. Although this letter was written to a specific group with a specific context, there is so much we can learn from this letter as we seek to follow Jesus today.

At first glance, our passage today may seem like a quick update from Paul about his travel plans. But when you look closely there is a lot we can learn.

Philippians 2:19-30 (From your bible, read aloud)

This is a long passage and may seem insignificant at first glance. As it was being read, you may have even zoned out a little bit. It takes some determination to

find the themes, but as they emerge, we see how important they are for us. Patience is necessary when we study God's word.

In his book, *A Long Obedience In The Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson cautions us that as Christians we are often impatient for results and want only the "highlights" when we read scripture.

*"The Christian life cannot mature in such ways. It is a 'long obedience in the same direction' which the mood of the world does so much to discourage. There are two biblical designations of people of faith that are extremely useful: **disciple** and **pilgrim**. Disciple says we spend our lives apprenticed to our master, Jesus Christ. Pilgrim tells us we are people who spend our lives going to God through Jesus Christ for the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)."*

What are your regular bible study habits?

We have so much information available to us through our smart devices. We can access and share all sorts of thoughts and ideas quickly. We can even utilize the technology to help us in our reading and study of the bible. When we come to passages like this, it might be tempting to skip over it and move on to something more quickly understandable or applicable to our daily lives. There is great value in slowing down and digging deep.

In this passage there are three themes that emerge:

- **THINK DEEPLY**
- **LOVE FULLY**
- **LIVE CONFIDENTLY**

THINK DEEPLY

Paul says, *“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon.”* Notice, he doesn't just say, *“I hope to send Timothy to you soon.”* Paul makes it clear that his hope is not in his own desires or ability, but it is in the Lord Jesus. He goes on to say, *“...and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.”*

Paul was a leader in the church, and they looked to him for guidance and direction in their new faith. This is a powerful position. But Paul doesn't rely on his own thoughts but consistently points people back to Jesus! He demonstrated over and over that his hope and his trust was in Jesus, not in himself.

In what ways does your hope and trust in Jesus influence your daily life?

LOVE FULLY

Paul speaks with great love and admiration about Timothy in Philippians 2:20-21, *“I have no one so like myself who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”*

Paul clearly loved and valued Timothy. Building this kind of significant relationship takes time and commitment. Paul honors Timothy as his faithful companion, someone who shares in his genuine concern for the church.

Timothy has been a great comfort to Paul as he suffered in prison, but because Paul knows that the church needs to be encouraged, he is willing to send Timothy back to them. He does not look only to his own needs, but also to the needs of others. Paul's love for Timothy and for the church is what motivates him.

When have you sacrificed your own desires in order to express love for someone else?

LIVE CONFIDENTLY

The final theme that emerges is about encouraging others to live their lives with a deep sense of security. We can use our influence to help the people around us live into a secure identity which is rooted and established in Jesus alone.

Philippians 2:22-25 (From your bible, read aloud)

Paul refers to Timothy and to Epaphroditus in family terms and acknowledges their Godly identity. He reminds the church of their faithful service and encourages them to do the same.

PAUL'S DESCRIPTION

My “son” (Timothy)

- Seeks the well-being of others more than his own

My “brother” (Epaphroditus)

- My “coworker”
- My “fellow” Soldier
- A “messenger” & “minister”
- One who came close to death for the work of Christ.

The kind of loving bond that Paul has with Timothy and Epaphroditus is inspiring. We don't get to choose our family of origin, but as followers of Jesus we are part of a larger family. One of the great privileges we have is to develop relationships that mutually build us up and remind us that our identity is first and foremost in Christ!

These kinds of relationships can help shape our Godly identity and remind us that no matter what we are facing, we can live confidently.

Share about a time when a thoughtful word of encouragement made all the difference in your life.

Who needs to hear your words of encouragement?

➤ TAKE AWAY

The kind of relationships Paul describes in this passage is something we can all aspire to develop. They don't happen quickly and require time, patience, commitment, and sacrifice. Paul reminds us that part of our responsibility is to consistently point people to Jesus so that they can think deeply, love fully and live confidently!

Take time to pray for one another that you would have the opportunity to encourage and build up a fellow believer this week.