

A PHILIPPIANS STUDY

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

December 3, 2023

## PHILIPPIANS week 12 - Aaron McRae

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 do you do to prepare for Christmas?

### ➤ EXPLORATION

As we enter into the Christmas season, we want to take a moment to reflect on the gift of Peace that is given to us through Jesus. Although the world around us is not at peace, we can experience a deep and abiding peace as we are reminded that no matter what we are facing, God is with us!

**Before you go any further, take a few deep breaths and quietly open your heart to receive the peace of Christ this Christmas.**

#### ***Philippians 4:1-3 (From your bible, read aloud)***

It is so encouraging to see how Paul speaks about his friends, the Philippians. They bring such joy into his life and he shares words of encouragement with them. He also urges them to set aside their differences for the sake of unity in the church.

Notice in verse 2 that he pleads with two women who he clearly respects as fellow co-workers for the gospel to “be of the same mind in the Lord.” Apparently there is some sort of disagreement, but Paul encourages the

church to help them work it out. All this is for the purpose of spreading the gospel.

#### **When you have a disagreement, how do you typically try to bring about a resolution?**

There are people in this world who can walk into a tense situation and bring a sense of peace. There are others whose presence seems to be like adding gasoline to a fire. Paul reminds us to be people who bring peace and unity into any situation. He knows that a church filled with division is not a good witness to the world.

#### ***Philippians 4:4 (From your bible, read aloud)***

This kind of rejoicing is not dependent on circumstances, it is when we rejoice “in the Lord” that we are focused in the right place. Remember, Paul is writing to them from prison where he was likely physically chained to a Roman guard. And yet, he tells them to “**Rejoice in the Lord always.**”

#### **Practices for Peace:**

- **Rejoice in the Lord**

Paul can say this boldly because he has learned this practice through his difficult life. He knows there are always reasons to express joy.

#### **Biblical Reasons to Rejoice**

In God’s word (Nehemiah 8:10)

That your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20)

When you are persecuted (Matthew 5:11-12)

As others rejoice (Romans 12:15)

Because it is God’s will (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

### ***Philippians 4:5 (From your bible, read aloud)***

Paul's definition of gentleness here is an attitude of kindness when the normal or expected response is retaliation.

#### **Practices for Peace:**

- Rejoice in the Lord
- Let your gentleness be evident to all

Paul calls us to extend gentleness to **ALL**, even to those who mistreat us. This is not easy. This kind of humble patience is also listed as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and only comes from the transforming work of God in our lives.

### **Share about a time when you struggled to give a gentle response to a challenging situation.**

### ***Philippians 4:6 (From your bible, read aloud)***

#### **Practices for Peace:**

- Rejoice in the Lord
- Let your gentleness be evident to all
- Do not be anxious about anything

The word "anxious" used here can refer to being overly and unnecessarily concerned about anything, but it is often used in contexts where persecution is the issue. This was certainly the case for the Philippians. Paul knows that the church needs to be prepared to live out their faith even in the face of persecution.

While we don't currently face the kind of difficulties the Philippians faced, we still face anxiety.

#### **Are You Anxious About...What does the Bible say**

- **What you have?** (Matthew 6:34)
- **What you do?** (Luke 10:41)
- **What you say?** (Matthew 10:19, Luke 12:11)
- **Singleness?** (1 Corinthians 7:32)

### **What is one thing that often tempts you to be anxious or worry?**

#### **Practices for Peace:**

- Rejoice in the Lord
- Let your gentleness be evident to all
- Do not be anxious about anything
- Present your requests to God

Instead of worrying, Paul encourages us to present our concerns and requests to God. This is more than just a

casual prayer. Paul urges us to petition God, expressing our deep desire for God to intervene in the situation. He also reminds us that our prayers must be offered in an attitude of thanksgiving and gratitude, trusting that God is good, no matter what the outcome may be.

***"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."***  
***Colossians 3:17***

In Paul's writings we find many reasons to give thanks, but the primary one, the ultimate one, is for God's gracious work through Jesus to bring us salvation! Jesus is the ultimate gift that brings peace.

### ***Philippians 4:7 (From your bible, read aloud)***

If we follow what Paul says, God's peace will stand guard over our hearts and minds like a strong army, a garrison for our souls. Since the city of Philippi was constantly under guard by soldiers from a Roman garrison the people would know immediately what Paul meant. God's peace brings strength and security.

The peace of God is found in the presence of God. It is not just about the gift, it is about the Giver. Rather than seeking peace, we seek God, the giver of peace.

### **Talk about the difference between seeking God and seeking peace. How might this change the way you pray?**

#### **> TAKE AWAY**

As we move into the Christmas season, there are many things that can cause us to be anxious. Paul's words are a timely reminder to us that when we give our focus and attention to God, we will experience peace that is beyond comprehension.

**Take time to pray for one another that you may experience God in a deep and abiding peace this week.**