



## Philippians Masterclass

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# Introduction

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This module is an expository Bible study on the letter of Philippians<sup>1</sup>. We shall start by looking at the historical and social context in which the letter was written.

We will then take an overview of the letter, like a reconnaissance plane performing a flyover. We will look at the main themes raised in the letter as well as the issues Paul chooses to address.

We shall then go back for a more detailed look at some parts of the letter, to examine key passages. At the same time we will try to address some of the more difficult passages within the letter which can be hard to understand or interpret, where necessary, returning to the original language (Greek) of the letter to shed some light<sup>2</sup>.

In our third “sweep” of the letter we shall look at all the characters involved – the author and the recipients and the readers (that’s us) to bring together all we have learned and what God has to say to us from this part of his precious WORD.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society published by Hodder & Stoughton Limited.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the module Scripture references are placed within Footnotes on each page, whilst references materials are quoted in the Endnotes at the end of each section. These latter references can be recommended to students by way of further study materials if required. More lengthy background information is also placed in the Endnotes.

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# 1.0 Aims of the module

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This module is in essence an expositional Bible Study of Paul's letter of Philippians, often referred to as an epistle. As with any sound Bible study we need to lay out some of our aims at the beginning. When coming to study the WORD of God, it is helpful for us to see it as a journey into the revealed mysteries of God. Every time there are new truths and mysteries for the Holy Spirit to show us, as well as reminding us of the truths he has already established in our lives.

When setting out on any journey if we do not have a destination in mind then we shall end up wandering aimlessly, going nowhere in particular. Likewise when we begin any journey into the WORD of God we should set course for a destination even if we expect the wind of the Spirit to take us through unfamiliar waters to get there. So what are some of the things that we are hoping to establish in our studies through this wonderful letter?

## Equip The People of God

The purpose of the EQUIP courses is to equip the people of God,

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

The Ephesians Masterclass is therefore designed for the equipping of God's people in their walk with God and living out their faith in the world in which we live today.

## An Adventure

Coming to the WORD of God can be an adventure every time. Like an onion with many layers, God has invested unlimited depths in his WORD. Our prayer should be that every time we come to the WORD of God we expect something new to happen.

Every time we come together to look at Ephesians, we must be prepared in our hearts to hear from Jesus personally and be ready to break out in praise at what

we learn together. Most of all we must be determined to encounter Jesus and something new from him. Let our attitude be a demanding one ... simply not willing to leave without experiencing more of Jesus – he will respond to that kind of hunger!

## **Exposition**

To learn how to expound the WORD of God for ourselves using sound hermeneutics. Although much of Scripture is written in clear instruction to us, there are some parts that are not immediately easy to understand and we shall take some time to look at these and meditate on them together.

## **More Than the Sum of its Parts**

Although there is plenty of teaching content to this module and expository teaching, it is hoped that each student will hear personally from the LORD Jesus Christ.

We have provided a notetaking facility on LRC Grow with each module, for each student to take down personal notes as and when they hear from the LORD. These are to supplement the Course notes as we progress through the course.

To this end it is hoped that each student will spend time seeking the LORD in prayer before each session they spend reading the module.

## **Contextual Study**

To learn how to study the WORD of God contextually rather than just topically. When we are brought the *rhema* or “now” Word of God in our Sunday gatherings or at other times, it is often done so drawing from various passages of Scripture, rather than from one single portion of the Scriptures, given the time constraints on us. In this module we are coming at it from the opposite angle. Instead of looking for Scriptures around a certain subject that we are looking at, we shall be spending time in one part of the Scriptures and drawing on other parts of the Scripture to help us expound it.

## **Putting Familiar Passages back into Context**

We often remember snippets of Scripture out of their original context which can sometimes lead to misinterpretation or misapplication of them. One of the aims of this module is to go back to the context of such familiar passages to see if we have learned to apply them correctly.

## Connection with the Past

Although we are not here for a history lesson, in today's modern society and with the people we read of living in such a different era it can be hard to empathise with our ancestors in the faith. As James looked back to his ancestor, Elijah and described himself like the man, so we need to learn to look back and see men and women just like us<sup>3</sup>.

## Cross-Referencing

To learn to cross-reference parts of Scripture. As we mature in the faith our familiarity with the WORD of God should grow with us, so that when we read it we are always seeing other parts of the Scriptures in our mind's eye – this enables the Holy Spirit to use them to speak to us through his WORD.

Later when we are meditating on the WORD of God throughout the day we will be like cows chewing the grass being able to bring to memory that which we read and draw it together with other parts of the WORD we already know. After all, the best tool for interpreting the WORD is the WORD itself.

“With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.”

**Psalm 119:13–15**

Also, many of us have the luxury of reading the WORD of God whenever we like. For some Christians around the world they may not have this luxury at all, as Bibles can often be banned.

Detailed expositional studies of a book such as Ephesians should give us all a familiarity so that if we had no Bibles to read, we could piece together the gist of everything that God has said through part of his WORD. Perhaps many parts we will be able to recite exactly, but the important thing is that when we become *that* familiar with the WORD of God then no one can take it away from us, it becomes imprinted on our minds so that it can be written on our hearts<sup>4</sup>.

Finally it is our hope that all students of this module have already read through Ephesians a few times before taking this Masterclass. It is our recommendation

<sup>3</sup> James 5<sup>17</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 8<sup>10</sup>



that students also read through the book continually whilst working through the material..

## **Lets get started ...**

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