



# PAUL

# SESSION 4

- **Main Passage:** Philippians 1:12-27
  - **Purpose:** To identify if we are at the point where we can agree with Paul that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”
  - **Session Snapshot:** Paul is in prison writing to the Church at Philippi. His greatest concern is not that he is in prison but that while he is in prison, the Gospel of Christ would continue to be preached. He understands that his suffering is more than worth it. He also knows that his release from prison, whether an earthly release or a heavenly release through death, will be of great gain, either to himself or to the body of Christ in Philippi.
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## GETTING STARTED

*Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.*

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 4 of their video series on Paul and that it’s part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader’s guide.

## DIGGING IN

*Jump into the session by watching this week’s video.*

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **What does it take to get us into the mindset that the situation that I’m in, as dire as it may seem, could be beneficial to the Gospel’s advancement?**
- **Why is it important, in the midst of difficulty, to ask, “Lord, what are you trying to teach me? What can I learn from this?”**
- **Have you ever been a part of a disagreement like Paul and Barnabas (that ended in reconciliation) that served to spread the Gospel to more places?**

- **What keeps us from being heaven-focused? Why don't we think more about heaven?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **As we studied last week, if Paul was not at the top of the list in enduring suffering, not just in the name of Christ, but in general, he was certainly close. Even while suffering, Paul's eyes were on the Kingdom. Whether by death or by life, Paul wanted only to advance the cause of Christ. Let's dig deeper into what that mindset looked like for him and what we can gain from it.**

## OPENING THE WORD

*Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.*

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Philippians 1. As Rick mentioned in the video, the secret of life is getting to the place where we can truthfully say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul expounds on this belief throughout the rest of this chapter.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. Of course, we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- **Time frame:** Philippians was one of Paul's last letters before he was martyred, sometime around A.D 62.
- **Purpose:** Philippians was written to Paul's close friends at the Philippian church, thanking them for their kindness and prayers while he was in prison. And he was encouraging them not to lose their faith because of his persecution.

THEN you or a volunteer read Philippians 1:12-18. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **The phrase "served to advance" or "for the furtherance" (depending on your translations) can also be translated "for the progress." What imagery comes to mind when you think of progress or progressing?**
  - Answers will vary. The way progress is used here refers to the forward movement of something – often armies – despite obstacles, dangers, and distractions. Paul's imprisonment proved to be no hindrance to spreading the Gospel, and it opened up new opportunities.
- **What did the church stand to gain from Paul's example of sharing the good news while imprisoned?**
  - Answers will vary. But "boldness" is near the top of the list. Even as his life was in danger, Paul's boldness encouraged the church to be bold in their witness as well. His example of a powerful witness to the Gospel as a prisoner demonstrated God's faithfulness to His persecuted children and that their imprisonment would not halt the Gospel's progress. Boldness begets boldness.
- **How is it possible for Paul to rejoice when others are rejoicing in his imprisonment?**
  - *Answer:* Paul's joy was not tied to his circumstances or his critics. He was glad when the Gospel was proclaimed with authority, no matter who received credit. He endured the unjust accusations without bitterness at his accusers. Rather, he rejoiced that they preached Christ, even in a pretense of godliness.

Before transitioning to the next passages of Scripture, say something like:

- **Up to this point, Paul has encouraged the Philippians in his imprisonment. He has encouraged their witness with his example, and he has rejoiced in the preaching of the Gospel no matter the reason! Let's move forward in the reading to see what is grounding this life approach.**

NEXT, you or a volunteer read Philippians 1:19-27. Then, ask:

- **What do you think Paul meant by “deliverance”?**
  - Answers will vary. “Deliverance” is from the basic Greek term for “salvation,” but it can also be rendered “well-being” or “escape.” That being said, there are a few possible interpretations: (1) it refers to Paul’s ultimate salvation; (2) it alludes to his deliverance from threatened execution; (3) he would finally be vindicated by the emperor’s ruling; or (4) Paul is talking about his eventual release from prison. Whatever the meaning, he was certain he would be freed from his temporary distress.
- **What are some key messages from Paul in this section?**
  - Answers will vary. (1) Life is not a matter of life or death. It is maintaining our faithful witness to Christ. (2) Life is not a matter of comfort or advancement for our own gain. It is to see the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom, no matter the circumstance. If we live, we get to serve Christ. If we die, we get to leave this fallen world and rejoice in Christ’s presence. (3) It is perfectly acceptable to have our minds set on heavenly things; however, while we are still here, we must continue to pursue Christ and advance His Kingdom. (4) Verse 27 can be roughly translated, “Only behave as citizens worthy of the gospel,” which plays off his phrasing in chapter 3 that we are “citizens of heaven.” He urges the Philippians to be unified in heart and mind and struggle together for victory against the common foe.

FINALLY, begin to close by saying something like this:

- **As Rick stated in the video, verse 21 sums up the secret that is the life of a Christian. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” So many times, we live our lives in the hustle and bustle of every day, and our relationship and duty to Christ is an afterthought. Paul is challenging us to live our lives in a way that, in everything we do, in every choice we make, Christ would be magnified. We should long for the day that we get to see our Savior face to face, but until that day, we will live in a way that makes much of Him and less of me.**

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

## ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

*Focus your group’s attention on one key takeaway from your time together.*

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **After listening to Rick and studying these passages of Scripture, some of us need to ask ourselves, “Do I have a relationship with God?”**
  - “Have I made the decision that I will live my life, every day, for Christ?”
- **For others of us, the evaluation we need to engage in is how we live our lives. Some of us need to ask, “Is serving Christ an afterthought to me?”**
  - “Am I making choices and taking actions daily that impact the Kingdom of God?”

- **Some of us need to evaluate how we're embracing our purpose. We need to ask, "How can I encourage my brothers in Christ to be bold in their serving?"**
  - "How can I make Kingdom progress here while keeping an eye on the eternal Kingdom?"

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.