

GROWTH GROUP STUDY

REFLECT

1. Think of a time when you felt homesick. *What were some of the things you missed about being “home”?*

2. *Do you have any friends you consider family? What is it about the relationship that makes it special?*

ENCOUNTER

Begin by reading Philippians 2:25-30 together. Epaphroditus was a man from Philippi. He is mentioned twice in the New Testament - both in the letter to the Philippians. He was responsible for bring a gift to Paul from the Philippians and stayed in Rome where he became sick. Once recovered, he was very concerned that the news of his recovery be communicated back to the Philippian church. According to verse 27, his sickness nearly cost him his life. He carried Paul's letter to the Philippians with him on his return to Philippi. Another man named Epaphras is mentioned in Colossians, however there is no indication that these are the same man.

3. Paul mentions the sickness of Epaphroditus three times in this passage (2:26, 27, 30). *Why do you think he felt it necessary to repeat?*

4. Paul also says to hold “men like him” (Epaphroditus) in high regard. *What attributes is Paul talking about when he writes “men like him”?*

5. *What is unusual about Epaphroditus's response to his recovery?*

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TRANSFORM

6. *Have you ever longed for or felt homesick for your church? If so, describe the situation. If not, why and what would it take for you to have that sort of affection for the local body?*

7. *Are there any members of the church family you can identify as being like Epaphroditus in their service and longing for the church? What can you do individually, or as a group, do to honor them?*

8. A common denominator between Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus is their selfless devotion to service and the church. *What are some things you can do to increase your devotion like this?*

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

The early church acted very much like family. Read Acts 2:42-47. Compare and contrast the way the church family was described in these verses with how it works today. *Should the church today try to imitate what is happening in these verses? If so, in what way(s)?*