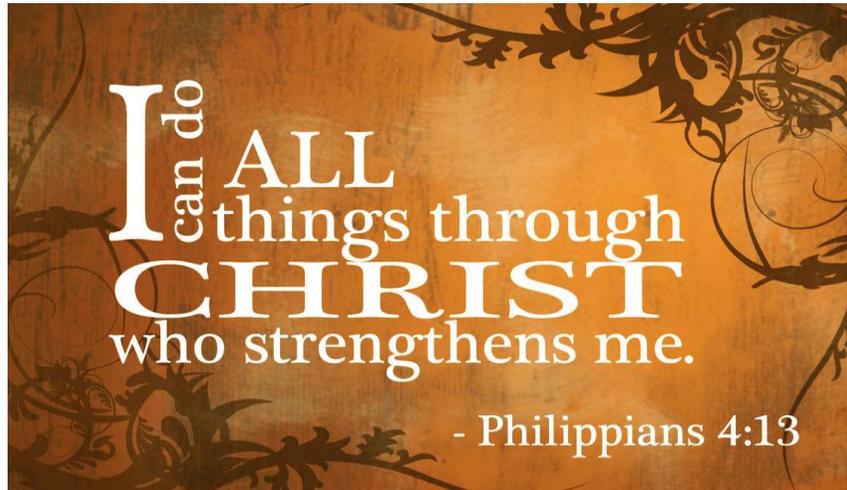


Philippians 4 Study notes



Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we come before You with a desire to learn more about you. Re-ignite the fire within our hearts to seek and know You more. Give us a passion to live for You - that our souls may find peace in serving You and Your Church. We bring our talents irrespective of what they are, to serve You and grant us your presence in this series of study. Amen

Just a minute:

Each person is to take 1 minute to note how last week's study engaged them. Did anyone take up the challenge of a diary of Joy talking about reconciliation or unity and / or writing a testimony of a time when they relied more on Christian tradition than the Holy Spirit?

Paul and Theology (have this read by someone)

Paul exhorts his readers to remain steadfast in their faith and to imitate the humility of Christ, who "emptied himself" and "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross". Throughout this letter, Paul is encouraging the people of Philippi to live out lives that are obedient to God and that are uplifting to one another. He is acutely aware of the

tension between a Christian life and that of the society. Due to his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus he seems to often flavour his words around Christ and not as strongly with the Holy Spirit. This by no means sees him ignoring or downplaying the Holy Spirit's role in God's mission for the church. He often notes in his writings of the Holy Spirit's presence in each Christian's heart, no Spirit means no faith. In most of his writings Paul concludes with a cheery Hello and a benediction of care and encouragement.

Read (have this read by someone)

Philippians 4

Take 10

Discuss the sermon and the readings. What was new, a surprise or a challenge? How has the tone of the book changed?

Take 2 mins

One of the challenges Christians face is between how optimists and pessimists view things. V4-9 addresses getting our perspective into a positive frame of mind.

Now Share

What mind sets draw optimists and pessimists away from the focus on ministry and mission in our churches. How may the church address this so as to bring our mindset around to one that upholds Paul's exhortations here?

Paul's focus on the Spiritual

Immanent (close and present) and transcendent (of the heavens, above all) views of God are natural and vary between Christians. Paul dances between these with V4-5,9 & 13 (Immanent) and Vs 6-7 (transcendent). There seems to be a wonderful tension and yet also a harmony between these views. Why is it important for Christians to uphold both. How do these flavour our worship and theology?

Society and Culture

The church used to have a stronger engagement with mission workers, both inland mission workers and overseas mission workers - letter

writing and financial support, sharing in many aspects of mission together. The Philippians did just this in Paul's earlier work (V14-19). How do you engage in mission work today? Is there enough encouragement towards and in return for what is done? How could this improve?

Church

V10-30 are best described as the fortitude (how we live through the hard seasons) verses in this letter to the Philippians. How have the times of fortitude strengthened or challenged your walk with God?

Extension:

A Church organisation started categorising all of their work they did as either a "Ministry" or an "Activity". At the start most back room work like accounts, admin and regulatory items were classed as an "Activity" and all boots on the ground and frontline work was classed as "Ministry". Over a number of years some areas of Ministry grew and diversified and in doing so some aspects started to be called "Activity" and not "Ministry". This caused arguments, divisions, and loss of staff and morale.

Looking at your church context there are many different engagements the church is making in the community and wider world. It may be beneficial to define and label these into categories, yet are not all the work of God and the church. Discuss the tension between the labels and the mission of the church and how they are then engaged. What benefits come from labels and what hinderances come.

Looking at Philippians as a whole there seems to have been arguments, divisions and loss of people based on theological and practical ministry engagements. When we read this letter in its entirety what lessons, warnings and encouragements can we gain from Paul?

If you had to give a 5 minute summation of this letter to the congregation what would be the main points you would include and in what order.

Encouragement

Read V4-9. In all of Paul's letters this would be one of the most encouraging and uplifting exhortations for the church. These short few verses tell us how to live and breathe our faith together so that we would be lights to our community. V8 strikes into our minds the ideal of making sure we focus on the good things of God in the world and our lives. If our focus is drawn from this we shall be positive and prepared as we see God's hand at work. Can you name some things from your Christian life experience that you could share with your group?

For the week ahead

Diary of Joy – Over the past 3 weeks of the study you have been challenged to write about Joy and where God's hand has been at work. As we conclude this study share with your group, if you are comfortable, anything you have found as noteworthy for your Christian walk from doing this diary.

Read: Go home and read Philippians... the whole book. Not out of duty but for the sake of encouragement and joy.

Prayer

Gracious God. Thank You for bringing us together and for this period of study. We thank you for the thoughts we have shared, for the opportunity to know each other a little bit better - to trust each other more. Encourage us to spread the Good News to our community as we are all desperate to know and love You more.

Lord, be our anchor, and stir up our smouldering faith that people may know You through our love, our hope and our deeds. Amen