

# Philippians

PURSUING AUTHENTIC JOY



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## ART INSPIRATION

In the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippian Church, a central theme is joy and rejoicing, despite challenging circumstances.

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" This verse encourages believers to find joy in their relationship with God at all times. It is a constant attitude of rejoicing, rooted in our connection with God. Color gradients were chosen to artistically symbolize the ongoing process of finding joy in the Lord as we navigate the ups and downs of life, blending different colors to reflect the diverse experiences we encounter. Similar to the gradual transitions within gradients, our pursuit of joy is not limited to specific moments or situations, but the totality of those moments can propel us forward in our faith.

Philippians 3:14 states, "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Gradients can be a creative way to visually represent this pursuit, illustrating the forward movement and progress as we strive toward the ultimate prize of fully knowing Christ. Just as gradients transition from one color to another, our pursuit of joy in Christ involves growth, transformation, and a constant pressing forward. The various colors within gradients can signify the different aspects of our spiritual journey, including faith, perseverance, gratitude, and hope, which all contribute to the experience of true joy.

By infusing the concept of gradients with biblical meaning from the book of Philippians, gradients can visually portray the continuous pursuit of joy as instructed by Paul. They remind us to rejoice in the Lord always, find joy in our relationship with God amidst various circumstances, and press forward toward the heavenly goal set before us.

# Introduction

## Walking the Streets of Ancient Philippi

If you were to drop into the ancient city of Philippi in the 50s A.D., you would find a city on the rise where people from other cities were moving, bringing their culture and way of life with them. Philippi had tradition on its side as well. It was named for Philip II of Macedonia, the father of the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great. This vibrant, Hellenistic city was inherited as a Roman colony a century before Paul's writing. The city boasted a growing population of around 15,000, making it a small but important urban center of the Macedonian region. Most significantly, Philippi sat directly on the main highway for this part of the Empire, connecting Rome in the west to the riches of the east.

What made Philippi unique was its people. The city attracted many Roman elites, sent or drawn there by the promises of land and wealth. Many were former military and political figures in the Roman government; hardened with ambition, they were staunchly loyal to Rome. As a Roman city, the gods of Rome received their due devotion in Philippi. In fact, archaeologists have uncovered 35 different deities that were worshipped. Roman culture was revered along with its values and its ruling Caesar. In Philippi, the Roman Emperor was celebrated as son of a god, exalted king of all kings, and championed as the one bringing salvation and peace to the nations. This peace came through the edge of a Roman sword and the beam of a Roman cross. Dissenting values were unwelcomed in this city resulting in a small population of Jews. Without enough Jewish residents to even form a synagogue, the few Jewish loyalists had to gather outside by the local Gangites River.

Philippi may seem like the last place on earth a thriving and faithful church would emerge. Yet in the early 50s A.D., the Apostle Paul and his ministry team stepped foot into the city to a surprising response. The story is detailed in Acts 16. As Paul would often do, he first sought to find the community within the city who shared a common worldview—the Jewish community.

Instead of looking up the local synagogue, he finds Lydia and a group of women gathered at the river. This well-connected business woman (dealing in luxury goods—purple fabrics) had previously sought the God of the Hebrews but was now compelled by Paul's message. God's rescue plan through His Son Jesus was the good news her heart could not resist (Acts 16:14).

Later, as Paul and his team remained in the city, they happened upon a poor girl enslaved in multiple ways; she was a slave of her human captors and of her spiritual captors. Without warning, Paul, this strange traveler with his strange message about Jesus, turned and drove her spiritual masters away. Set free from the chains of darkness, her human masters recognized their loss of profit. They physically assaulted Paul and Silas and cast them into the prison. This sort of revolution would not be tolerated in Philippi.

Bloodied and bruised, how would these two strangers respond? Would they finally quiet down? Not a chance. Instead, they sang in their chains. As if in unison, the walls of the confined dungeon shook and the chains broke. Anyone in their right mind would run away and leave the guards to face the harsh consequences of allowing such an escape. Paul and Silas, however, did not run. In fact, the other captives stayed put. They did not pursue freedom at the cost of this Roman soldier's life. What an astonishing act of grace!

**God's rescue plan through His  
Son Jesus was the good news  
her heart could not resist.**

Taken aback, the soldier asked what must he do to have this same kind of courage in the face of danger. Paul's answer was to believe in a new King. His name is Jesus. He is King, not Caesar. The soldier needed to publicly identify with King Jesus, observe the ritual of baptism, then come and follow Him. This was no small request. To repudiate Caesar, in Philippi no less, and to identify with a King that Caesar had put to death in such a humiliating fashion was treasonous and dangerous. But there was something different about this King and His messengers. **King Jesus was the way to bring peace and salvation!**

With three individuals from Acts 16, a small little house church in Philippi was born. What a surprising group they were: a Jewish woman living toward the top of Roman society, a slave-girl living toward the bottom, and a Roman soldier in the middle. Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, wealthy and poor—surely this church would never work. Add to their vast differences that their city might very well respond to the new church with violence and hostility. Surely, joy and peace would be hard to come by in such a place.

About a decade later, Paul found himself imprisoned yet again. Word had reached him that this little church in Philippi was in need of encouragement. Not only was Philippi a dangerous place to profess Jesus as King, but it looked as if their spiritual leader's days were numbered. Was following Jesus really worth it? Why would God allow His apostle and His Gospel to be imprisoned in chains?

This house-church in Philippi was precious to Paul and they needed to be reminded that Jesus was worth any suffering. He was the King the world desperately needed. He was exalted through suffering and His followers could expect the same. True peace comes only from allegiance to Him. Perhaps, Paul needed to remind himself of this as well. So Paul takes pen to parchment and records a very personal letter to the church at Philippi.

# Walking the Pages of Philippians

Paul's letter was relatively short, making for a public reading of only 15-20 minutes. This letter was read and re-read, copied and re-copied, treasured and preserved. We now refer to that letter as *Philippians*—the very letter that we now turn to read together in our church, in our city, and in our day. The purpose of Philippians is to encourage the church to strive for joyful unity, even in suffering, by living as citizens loyal to King Jesus who was exalted through suffering.

Most likely, Paul wrote this letter in the early 60s A.D. from the shackles of a Roman prison. Paul mentions some form of Jesus as Christ over 50 times and the word “gospel,” a term reserved for announcements about kings and kingdoms, nine times in 104 verses. Given the letter is written from prison, the repeated emphasis on *joy* and the command to *rejoice* (referenced 19 times) is surprising. Even in suffering and trial, joy persists!

Most surprising, however, is the poetic hymn of praise to the exalted Jesus. That Jesus should be exalted (not Caesar) is shocking enough, but that Jesus is exalted through the selfless service to the point of death on a cross is truly earth-shattering. And yet, this was the very good news that Jesus' followers kept proclaiming. Jesus-followers are the recipients of this ancient news and have the privilege of reading this letter in community, reflecting on its message, reveling in its pronouncement, and resting in the joy it promises!

**Even in suffering &  
trial, joy persists!**

PART ONE

Chapters 1-2 | Prayer & Encouragement

PART TWO

Chapters 3-4 | Warnings & Thanksgiving

This four-chapter masterpiece opens like many ancient letters, greeting its recipients and offering a blessing of grace and peace (Phil 1:1-2). It also closes in familiar fashion, again greeting those gathered to hear it read aloud (Phil 4:21-23). Part one of the letter contains Paul's prayer to God concerning this church, as well as encouragement for the gospel to continue advancing through the imitation of Jesus, the suffering King (Phil 1:3-2:30). In part two, Paul warns of the dangers of disunity and disharmony, whether that be on cultural-theological or personal grounds (Phil 3:1-4:20). Paul concludes with thanksgiving for this church's partnership in the advancement of the gospel.

All in all, Philippians is a letter of thanksgiving and praise, written in painful circumstances, and pointing to Jesus as Messiah and King. It is breathtaking in its vision of Jesus, warm in its encouragement, and challenging in its demand. We join the ancient house-church in Philippi and joyfully declare "...to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). Together we confess Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (2:11). In unison we believe that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus (4:7).

# How to use this Journal

## PURPOSE

The accurate study and application of God’s Word, the Bible, is a foundational part of the Christian life. The challenge of 2 Peter 3:18 is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,” and that is exactly what the Philippians Study Journal is designed to help you do. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul instructs the Timothy, a young pastor, that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” A careful, intentional study of Philippians will help you mature as a follower of Jesus and “be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” It will help you express the authentic Jesus where you live, work, and play.

## TOOL

The Philippians Study Journal is designed to help you understand and apply the Scriptures accurately to your life. The Inductive Bible Study Method is an effective tool in accomplishing that goal. This method equips you to make key observations in a passage of scripture, interpret it within its proper context, and then apply it to daily life. For a brief introduction to the Inductive Bible Study Method, The Training Center of Fellowship Bible Church has prepared a helpful video to get you started. You can watch the video at [fellowshipnwa.org/Philippians](https://fellowshipnwa.org/Philippians) or simply scan the QR code with your smart phone camera to access the link.

Additionally, The Training Center offers Personal Bible Study, a class that goes much deeper into this method of study. If you have not yet taken this class, we encourage you to do so to experience the riches that come from intentional exploration of God’s written Word.

Visit [trainingcenternwa.org/events](https://trainingcenternwa.org/events) to sign up for the next available Personal Bible Study class or contact our Training Center team at [training@fellowshipnwa.org](mailto:training@fellowshipnwa.org) for more information.

## SPECIFICS

The Philippians Study Journal is laid out in weekly sessions with resources for daily engagement to help us grow together.

Each session includes the following:

- scripture passage for the week
- plenty of space to record insights from personal study, group discussion, and teachings
- contextual introduction to aid in the study of the week's passage
- discussion questions to help you process the passage in personal and small group settings

Use this journal wherever you study Philippians—in your personal time with God, in small group meetings, and in corporate worship. Discover how Paul's instruction and encouragement to the church at Philippi can guide and encourage you today.

Inductive Bible Study Introduction Video

*Scan QR code to watch*





CHAPTER ONE

# Priority & Proclamation of the Gospel

WEEK ONE

## Partnership in the Gospel

WEEK TWO

## The Gospel Advances

WEEK THREE

## To Live is Christ

## WEEK ONE

# Partnership in the Gospel

## Philippians 1:1-11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. <sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

**“...he who began a good work in  
you will carry it on to completion  
until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 1:1-11

**DAY TWO**

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

**DAY THREE**

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4, 11-12

**DAY FOUR**

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

**DAY FIVE**

Psalms 103:1-18

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

There's a common saying, *one thing leads to another*. That is what we see in the opening lines of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Immediately after writing his customary greeting, Paul shows how one thing leads to another—gratitude, joy, and prayer.

What makes you thankful usually brings you joy. Gratitude and joy are linked. And so, often our gratitude that brings joy is tied to the people in our lives. This is how Paul felt about the Philippian church. They were dear to him and he was dear to them. Verses 3-5 tell us this church was on Paul's mind often. And as often as they came to his mind, gratitude bubbled up along with them. With this thankfulness came joy. As Paul pictured the people in this church, they brought a smile to his face. He considered them partners in the gospel. They were in this kingdom-work together!

The Greek word for *partnership* is often translated *fellowship*.

Fellowship is something that we have in common; it's the life we share together. In this case, ours is a "partnership in the gospel."

The life, message, and ongoing work of Christ Jesus is what binds us together. When we embrace this truth, it brings gratitude and joy. And grateful joy leads to one more thing—prayer for one another.

This week, pray Philippians 1:9-11 for the people in your life, your small group, and the broader church who have been life-giving partners in the gospel. It is a rich prayer that raises our vision of each other.

**What makes you thankful usually brings you joy. Gratitude and joy are linked.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul begins his letter by rejoicing over the Philippian church and the way they have lived their lives of faith. Who is someone that inspires you by their life of faith? Explain why.
2. Paul writes, "...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (6). What good work has Jesus done in your life? What good work is He currently doing that is helping you to become more like Him?
3. As you read about Paul's affection for these people, can you think of a community of believers you feel this way about? How does being a part of such a community impact your life?
4. Consider verses 9-11. What goes into a "church being pure and blameless for the day of Christ"(10)? Why are these things important in the life a church?
5. Paul paints a picture of a thriving church who is striving for the gospel with joy, perseverance, and wisdom. What would we as individuals need to do to for our church to be like this?

## WEEK TWO

# The Gospel Advances

### Philippians 1:12-20

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

<sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

DAY ONE

Philippians 1:12-20

DAY TWO

Genesis 50:15-21

DAY THREE

Romans 8:28-39

DAY FOUR

Job 36:22-33

DAY FIVE

Psalm 2

**“The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached.”**

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20

We know what happens when you try to put out a grease fire by throwing water on it—it causes the fire to spread. This is what happened when the Jewish leaders tried to put out the fire of Paul’s gospel-preaching by throwing him in prison. In Acts 19, Paul expressed his desire to see the gospel spread throughout Europe, even to its power-center of Rome (Acts 19:21). The Jewish leaders seemingly hijack that plan by arresting Paul in Jerusalem. Yet an appeal made in his court trial ends up sending him on a state-funded trip to Rome. There Paul remains under extended house arrest.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is locked up, supervised constantly by Roman guards. What would this mean for his gospel message? In Paul’s own words, “...what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel” (1:12). Far from shutting down, or even stalling out, his imprisonment actually helped spread the gospel further than Paul could have dreamed! Paul wanted to preach the gospel in Rome. Not only does he do that, but the gospel penetrates Caesar’s palace through the very guards assigned to keep him in lock-down. The gospel is God’s unstoppable good news of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. It cannot be locked up or shut down!

Seeing the gospel’s fire spread even further causes Paul’s joy to burn brighter. How about you? Where have you seen God advance His plan and purposes through circumstances that were meant to stifle the gospel and cause pain? Take joy in God’s overcoming power and redemptive plan.

**The gospel is God’s unstoppable good news of salvation in and through Jesus Christ. It cannot be locked up or shut down!**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In verse 12, Paul writes that he believes everything that has happened to him has really served to advance the gospel. This is a shift to view life through the lens of eternity rather than a temporal lens focused on present circumstances. How do we get to the point where we can view life this way?
2. What would it look like to live as if everything in your life really serves to advance the gospel? How would it change the way you react or respond to people and circumstances? How would it change the way you pray?
3. Verse 14 points to the vital importance of community in talking about the gospel with others. Who is someone with whom you would like to share the gospel? How might your community help embolden you to have an intentional conversation with that person?
4. Paul's goal is that Christ be exalted in life and in death. Look over the previous 20 verses; what characteristics of Paul's life do you see that honor Christ?
5. What ways do you feel your life exalts Jesus? Don't be polite or humble, it is okay to speak truth and talk about how you seek to exalt Jesus! What are ways that others can pray for you in this area?

## WEEK THREE

# To Live is Christ

### Philippians 1:21-30

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.<sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!<sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;<sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.<sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,<sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

<sup>27</sup> Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel<sup>28</sup> without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,<sup>30</sup> since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

**“...to live is Christ  
and to die is gain.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 1:21-30

**DAY TWO**

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

**DAY THREE**

2 Corinthians 5:11-15

**DAY FOUR**

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 27

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30

Everyone has a vision of *the good life*. This is our vision of what brings personal fulfillment, meaning, and significance. We pursue this vision because we believe it will deliver joy and peace. And if we're honest, we usually connect the good life with good circumstances and happy experiences.

Paul had a vision for the good life. He was clear and succinct about it—"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). Paul lived with a passion for Jesus and His purposes. So earthly life was focused on pursuing Him, which meant that heavenly life was the sweet reward of enjoying Jesus more fully. When the good life is found in Jesus and His purposes, today's life has deep passion and tomorrow's death is a mere trading up to a greater experience of Him.

The good life becomes as lasting, unshakable, deep, and wide as Jesus Himself!

The beauty of this vision is that the good life cannot be threatened by circumstance or experience. If "to live is Christ and to die is gain" is our pursuit, then there is no tragic experience, broken dream, blocked goal, or thwarted plan that can derail our joy and peace. Likewise, there is no next purchase, travel adventure, career success, or happy relationship that can increase our joy and peace. Our joy and peace can be as settled and sweet as Jesus Himself.

**When the good life is found in Jesus and His purposes, today's life has deep passion and tomorrow's death is a mere trading up to a greater experience of Him.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This section continues to show how Paul lives with an eternal lens instead of a temporal lens focused on present circumstances. What perspective shift might Jesus be inviting you into in order to view life differently right now?
2. “For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_.” Given your priorities and schedule this week/month/year, how would you honestly fill in that blank?
3. The Holy Spirit is constantly shaping our hearts to be more like Jesus. With this in mind, why does it matter that we live lives “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (27)?
4. How does a church full of individuals with different politics, socio-economic status, cultural, and theological backgrounds put into practice verses 27-28?
5. Read verses 29-30. Our suffering can lead us to be more like Christ. Paul, Peter, James, John, and countless others have suffered to advance the gospel. Do you expect the same as you seek to follow Jesus? Why or why not?

## CHAPTER TWO

# Imitating the Example of Christ

### WEEK FOUR

## Example of Christ

### WEEK FIVE

## Example of Paul

### WEEK SIX

## Example of Timothy and Epaphroditus



## WEEK FOUR

# Example of Christ

### Philippians 2:1-11

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,<sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,<sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 2:1-11

**DAY TWO**

John 18:28-19:16

**DAY THREE**

John 19:17-42

**DAY FOUR**

John 20:1-18

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 146

**“...in humility value others  
above yourselves...”**

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

A tuning fork's job is to establish a single note to which everyone can tune. Most tuning forks are made to vibrate at a tone musicians call "concert A." To tune a piano, you would start by playing the piano's "A" key while ringing an "A" tuning fork. Then the piano string is adjusted to be in tune with the fork.

That's one of the critical roles that worship plays in our lives. Worship tunes our hearts to the true note of God—who He is and what He does. Songs are one of the tuning forks the Spirit seems pleased to use in this tuning process. Hymns and choruses, old and new, make up the worship library that tune our hearts to who God is and what He does. But there's something about certain old hymns that have done this heart work for generations of Christians. Whether it be *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, *Amazing Grace*, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, or *How Great Thou Art*, the lyrics of these hymns adjust our hearts back in tune with God.

This was true of the early church in Philippi. Philippians 2:5-11 contains possibly the earliest Christian hymn. This famous passage centers on the humility of Jesus Christ and is rich in the doctrines of His incarnation, crucifixion, and exaltation. The lyrics tell us of the heart and character of Jesus, as well as His past and future triumph. We gain a vision of the one true God who bowed down in great humility for us and to whom we will all bow down in great exaltation of Him. This hymn anchors us when suffering comes and allows our hearts to sing in tune with the truth of who God is and what He does.

**Worship tunes our hearts  
to the true note of God—  
who He is and what He does.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to Paul's words, what four blessings can we experience from being united with Christ?
2. If this unity with Christ has not been your experience, why? What invitation might God be extending to you? What next step of obedience could open the door to deeper intimacy with Him?
3. Describe what true unity (not uniformity) looks like in a church. What is the basis of unity? How would it change our church to have true unity? What role does humility play in having unity?
4. Read verse 4. If this is how God's people are called to live, what would it look like to embrace these instructions in your home and community?
5. Explain how Jesus "emptied himself." List as many examples as possible. How does Christ's model of humility motivate you towards humility?

## WEEK FIVE

# Example of Paul

### Philippians 2:12-18

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

<sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing,<sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky<sup>16</sup> as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.<sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.<sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 2:12-18

**DAY TWO**

John 17:1-10

**DAY THREE**

John 17:11-18

**DAY FOUR**

John 17:19-26

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 133

**“...I did  
not run  
or labor  
in vain.”**

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

In reference to the metaphor of a tuning fork, how do we know when our lives are in tune with God? Last week, we noted that worship is how God tunes our hearts to Him. But how do we know when our lives are ringing in unison with what He has implanted in our hearts? This week's passage gives us two key ways we can check our lifestyle to determine our degree of attunement.

Paul tells this beloved church to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (2:12-13). We are to work out what God is already working in. The salvation that God is bringing about in our hearts is to work its way out into our daily lives.

This week's passage highlights our obedience to God and our unity with one another. Our inward salvation shows up in our upward relationship with God and our outward relationships with others.

The faith that we hold in Jesus Christ “holds us firmly to the word of life” (2:16) and holds us in harmony with each other (2:14). Just like a tuning fork has two prongs that resonate with each other, obedience to God and unity with others are the two relational prongs that work in unison together.

**Our inward salvation shows up in our upward relationship with God and our outward relationships with others.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? What is the underlying factor that makes *working it out* possible (13)? How does this bring comfort?
2. In a culture where people are quick to take offense and argue, is it possible to follow Paul's instructions in verse 14, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing"? Who is someone you know who lives this out really well? How could you start putting verse 14 into practice in your own life?
3. According to verses 14-16a, how can we be blameless, pure, without fault, shining like stars? Why is this important?
4. How did the reality of the "day of Christ" affect how Paul lived and conducted his ministry (16b)? Does it affect the way you live?
5. In verse 17, Paul uses the image of being a "sacrificial offering." How does this provide an example for us in our life and ministry?

## WEEK SIX

# Example of Timothy and Epaphroditus

### Philippians 2:19-30

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

<sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

<sup>23</sup> I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup> And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

<sup>25</sup> But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. <sup>26</sup> For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. <sup>29</sup> So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, <sup>30</sup> because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

**“..he has served with me in  
the work of the gospel.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 2:19-30

**DAY TWO**

Hebrews 11:1-12

**DAY THREE**

Hebrews 11:13-31

**DAY FOUR**

Hebrews 11:32 - 12:2

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 78

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

Heroes. We've all had them, even back to our earliest memories. Our childhood heroes may have been real or fictional, on television or in the neighborhood. Likely, our childhood heroes loomed large because of what they could do, how they looked, or what they had accomplished. Yet often, once we learned more about who that superstar really was, our hero came crashing down. This has happened so often that in our current cultural climate, even the mention of someone heroic is met with cynicism.

Yet we still need heroes, examples we can look to in life. As we mature, we realize our heroes were a lot more down-to-earth and next-door than we realized as a child. Think of the women and men whom you admire—those who walk with God deeply and authentically, and have gone the distance. What names come to mind? Better yet, what qualities cause you to admire them so much?

The beauty of the local church is that we have women and men among us that we can look to as spiritual examples. Paul points that out to the church at Philippi. These Philippian believers were well acquainted with Timothy and Epaphroditus, two brothers in Christ who emulated both character qualities and sacrificial actions that were heroically ordinary in their walk with Jesus. Take time this week to read through the passage and trace what qualities made both Timothy and Epaphroditus the kind of spiritual examples that Paul wanted to highlight in his letter to his friends.

**...we still need heroes,  
examples we can look  
to in life.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul mentions two brothers in Christ who are very dear to him - Timothy and Epaphroditus. How does he describe them? Which descriptive words stand out most to you? Why?
2. The descriptions go beyond just friendship and fellowship. What indicates that they are not just living life together but *on mission* together?
3. How might God be inviting you to help cultivate relationships characterized by genuine concern for one another's welfare in your home? Community? Workplace?
4. Paul instructs the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus in the Lord with great joy and honor people like him (29). Why does Paul say this? What would it look like today to "honor people like Epaphroditus"?
5. Thinking of Timothy and Epaphroditus as part of Paul's team, why do you think Paul always did ministry with others? Who are you *on mission* with? What does that look like?



CHAPTER THREE

# The Gift of Salvation

WEEK SEVEN

**Our Past | Justification**

WEEK EIGHT

**Our Present | Sanctification**

WEEK NINE

**Our Future | Glorification**

## WEEK SEVEN

# Our Past | Justification

### Philippians 3:1-11

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

“...I consider everything  
a loss because of the  
surpassing worth of  
knowing Christ...”

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 3:1-11

**DAY TWO**

Romans 5:1-11

**DAY THREE**

Romans 6:1-11

**DAY FOUR**

Romans 8:1-11

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 32

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

Up to this point in his Philippian letter, Paul has been profoundly encouraging and positive. In fact, Philippians is one of Paul's most positive letters—there's no mention of a particular sin; there's no rebuke or correction for the church. Paul starts Chapter 3 with the same tone—"Further, brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!" (3:1). But then verse 2 takes a sharp turn. Paul sharply tells his friends to watch out for those who would cause them serious spiritual harm. In fact, he calls the people who could trip up these believers, "dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh." Paul takes the common Jewish slur for Gentiles, "dogs," and applies it on a particular group of Jews called the Judaizers. Why is Paul so harsh?

Paul uses straight-talking, blunt language because of what the Judaizers' message could do to the Philippians' faith. Their message of righteousness by self-effort (religion) would corrode and erode the Philippians' trust in righteousness by faith in Jesus' work (grace). Spiritually, it was a life or death issue! Paul knows that "putting confidence in the flesh" (3) is a dead end and "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (8) leads to enjoying resurrection life. It's a major theological difference that changes our experience of the Christian life.

Our theology leads to our biography. Good, right, and true belief in Jesus Christ leads to a deep, rich, and joyful life. That's why Paul starts this chapter by saying, "...rejoice in the Lord!" Our understanding of our righteous position in Christ (justification) is our foundation for joy!

**Our theology leads to our biography. Good, right, and true belief in Jesus Christ leads to a deep, rich, and joyful life.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read verses 1-6. What are things Paul says he could have put confidence in? What are ways we put “confidence in the flesh”?
2. What are ways you have experienced the “surpassing worth of knowing Christ” (8)? Describe what that is like for you.
3. What role does faith play in counting things as loss to gain Christ? How would you explain it to someone else?
4. What does it mean to have the righteousness of God? What are the implications of that for your identity and lifestyle?
5. What does it look like to share in Christ’s sufferings? How does knowing “the power of his resurrection” (10) help in that endeavor?

## WEEK EIGHT

# Our Present | Sanctification

### Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

**“I press on toward the goal to  
win the prize for which God  
has called me **heavenward**  
in Christ Jesus.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 3:12-16

**DAY TWO**

2 Timothy 4:6-8

**DAY THREE**

Hebrews 12:1-6

**DAY FOUR**

Hebrews 12:7-13

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 121

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

How do you know when someone is pursuing a life goal? What kind of behaviors demonstrate they are serious about that goal? Paul answers these questions in this section of Philippians 3. He compares the Christian life to a race. He also includes himself as one of the team of runners. He begins the passage with *I* and ends it with *us*. Paul's assertion is that our present spiritual pursuit is a team sport!

Just like a race we run, the goal we pursue shows up in our lifestyle. There are race-day actions that we embrace. First, our vision is different when we run. We focus only on a certain direction—FORWARD! We train ourselves to not look backwards to things that would slow us down, break our stride, or trip us up. Second, our effort is different when we run. We expect a measure of “straining toward what is ahead” (13) and pressing “on toward the goal” (14). Exertion is expected when we are in serious pursuit of a goal.

The Christian life is not a chase for something unattainable; it is a race we run in confidence. The Bible describes this kind of confident progress, *sanctification*. And our sanctification (growth) in Jesus is based on our justification (position) in Jesus. Or to paraphrase Paul, we press on to take hold of what is already holding us. In this race metaphor, sanctification is us running the race that Jesus has already won.

**...sanctification is us  
running the race that  
Jesus has already won.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What metaphor does Paul use to describe the process of becoming more like Christ? Is there any way that metaphor mirrors your experience of growing in Christ?
2. How can relying on past successes or dwelling on past failures hinder us in our journey to become more like Jesus? What in your past do you need to forget?
3. Paul states that we play a part in our spiritual growth. What are some practical steps we can take in becoming more like Christ?
4. What is Paul's goal in verse 14? What is the goal that you are pressing on toward?
5. Paul teaches that there are *now* (we are saved) and *not yet* (we are still becoming) aspects of our salvation and spiritual growth. How do we live in that reality?

## WEEK NINE

# Our Future | Glorification

### Philippians 3:17-21

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup> For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

**“...our citizenship  
is in heaven.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 3:17-21

**DAY TWO**

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

**DAY THREE**

1 Corinthians 15:35-50

**DAY FOUR**

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 73

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

Robert Frost closed out his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*, with these lines:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Similarly, Paul simplifies life as a decision to choose one of two roads—setting the mind on earthly things or eagerly awaiting the heavenly Savior. One makes us “enemies of the cross of Christ” (18) that leads to “destruction” (19); the other makes us a “model” (17) worthy of imitation, ending in glory (21). These are starkly different roads, and to quote Frost, the choice makes “all the difference!”

How do we stay on the road that leads to future glory with Jesus? The answer is found in the passage—it is our mindset. Paul encourages us to remember that our true citizenship is in heaven *now*.

The Lord will come again just as He has promised and we will be like Him *one day*. Our mindset is to be on *that* home and *that* future... even during this life. And that makes all the difference.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is someone past or present whose faith you have imitated and why?
2. Paul sheds tears when referring to the enemies of the cross. What is the condition of our hearts toward unbelievers? What does it look like for us to be brought to tears for people living in sin?
3. How does Paul describe these enemies? How would you describe the “enemies of the cross” (18) today?
4. Our citizenship is in heaven and ultimately Jesus will bring “everything under his control” (21). How do those two things give us hope as we eagerly await our Savior and the glorification that follows His return?
5. In glory, citizens of heaven will receive a perfected heavenly body, free from the presence of sin, and see Jesus face-to-face. Reflect and share on what hope that gives us in our present circumstances.



CHAPTER FOUR

# Putting the Gospel into Practice

WEEK TEN

Joy for Today

WEEK ELEVEN

Peace for Today

WEEK TWELVE

Contentment for Today

## WEEK TEN

# Joy for Today

### Philippians 4:1-5

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

<sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

**“Rejoice in the  
Lord always.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 4:1-5

**DAY TWO**

1 Peter 1:3-9

**DAY THREE**

James 1:2-12

**DAY FOUR**

Acts 16:19-34

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 33

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 4:1-5

Think of a person who models authentic joy. How do they express their joy? Is it their deep belly laugh, quiet contentment, harmony in their relationships, ability to weather life's storms with a smile...? Most likely, it is a combination of all the above.

Paul starts Chapter 4 by telling us to rejoice... twice! And if two times is not enough, he says to rejoice always. And if that is not enough, the Greek verb he uses is in the command form. Twice we are commanded to have authentic joy, always. How is this possible? Is it even reasonable to command joy?

Not only is it reasonable to command us to choose joy always, it is logical because our command to rejoice has huge qualifiers. We "rejoice in the Lord always" (4). We remember "the Lord is near" (5). The command to practice authentic joy is not God's demand for us to cheer up or fake it til you make it. Authentic joy comes from remembering God's presence in all circumstances and our position in Christ at all times. This is how we can choose joy today.

**Authentic joy comes from remembering God's presence in all circumstances and our position in Christ at all times.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Paul describe his feelings about the Philippian church in verse 1? Are there brothers and sisters in Christ whom you feel that way about? How did you get to that point in your relationship?
2. In verses 2-3, Paul is addressing two people who were in conflict. What principles of resolving conflict do you see here?
3. Unity in the Church is important. Read John 17:20-23. Why did Jesus pray for His followers to be in unity? How can we live in unity with people who are not like us or with whom we disagree?
4. What does it mean to rejoice? What are some practical ways you can choose to express joy?
5. In verse 5, what characteristic does Paul say should be evident in followers of Jesus? What do you think that looks like in your life? Would others say that you are a gentle, reasonable, considerate person?

## WEEK ELEVEN

# Peace for Today

### Philippians 4:6-9

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

“...the peace of God,  
which transcends all  
understanding, will  
guard your hearts  
and your minds in  
Christ Jesus.”

DAY ONE

Philippians 4:6-9

DAY TWO

1 Peter 5:6-11

DAY THREE

James 3:13-18

DAY FOUR

Matthew 6:25-34

DAY FIVE

Psalms 55

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

Last week, we noted that an authentically joyful person has an ability to weather life's storms with a smile. In the Scriptures, there is always a connection between joy and peace. It is what made the Apostle Paul pray, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace..." (Rom 15:13). F.B. Meyer once said, "Joy is peace dancing and peace is joy at rest." Joy and peace may not be identical, but they are certainly intertwined.

We all know this kind of peace is not natural. Ours is an anxious and angry world! The kind of peace found in Philippians 4 is supernatural, yet it is for all Christians. This peace is from God and of God. Paul promises us the "peace of God" (7) that comes from the "God of peace" (9). We are not commanded to generate this peace in an anxious and angry world. We are commanded to receive the peace of God that comes from the God of peace who *rules* over this world.

That posture of receiving peace is marked by prayer and gratitude (6). Thankful prayer opens our heart to receive the peace of God which transcends earthly logic and protects our thoughts and emotions. This promise and path to peace is rich! Meditate on it over and over this week.

**Joy is peace dancing  
and peace is joy at rest.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are we instructed to deal with anxiety in verse 6?
2. What anxious thoughts are you wrestling with? Pause right now and say or write out a prayer asking God for what you need in this situation. Thank Him for hearing and answering you. How can you make this your first response when you have anxious thoughts?
3. What is the promise in verse 7? What do you think it means that God's peace "will guard your hearts and your minds"? How has this been true in your life?
4. What does verse 8 tell us to fill our minds with? How can we make this a practice?
5. What does verse 9 promise us will happen when we "think about such things" (8)?

# Contentment for Today

## Philippians 4:10-23

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

<sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>21</sup> Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. <sup>22</sup> All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

**“I can do all this  
through him who  
gives me strength.”**

**DAY ONE**

Philippians 4:10-23

**DAY TWO**

1 Timothy 6:6-10

**DAY THREE**

Hebrews 13:5-6

**DAY FOUR**

1 Timothy 6:17-19

**DAY FIVE**

Psalm 37

## EXPLORING PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

Our study of Philippians has prompted us to call to mind various role models of the Christian life who have practiced sacrificial faithfulness and modeled authentic joy. Now, think of a person who models true contentment. What about their outward lifestyle makes you conclude they are content within?

For Paul, contentment is learned. He discovered that to be content within, had little to do with external circumstances, and everything to do with the empowering presence of Christ. **The indwelling Christ was his confidence and strength.** Contentment can be found in all circumstances, good and bad. For most of us, contentment is not an automatic response to circumstances. It is a learned response. In this passage, Paul provides us with an example of how a contented person lives in a material world.

He also points us to the generosity of the Philippian church. It was of great encouragement to him. Often contentment and generosity are tangent to one another. Just like joy and peace, contentment and generosity are not identical, but they are intertwined.

Paul thanks and applauds the Philippian church for their financial generosity toward him, for it fueled the advancement of the gospel. In this thank you letter, the passage includes a rich insight as to how God works through the practice of generous, sacrificial giving to provide courage, resources, and a sense of sufficiency no matter what the need. Spiritually speaking, generosity has a pay-off! Don Reed says about our giving, “It’s not what God wants from us, but what He wants for us.”

**...contentment is not an automatic response to circumstances. It is a learned response.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is a contented person you know? How did they get to be that way? How does it affect their life? How does it affect your life?
2. Read verses 11-13. What do you think Paul is saying here? Based on verse 13, where do we find our source of contentment?
3. Since contentment is a learned response, how is God teaching you this skill in your current set of circumstances? How is He making Himself known as your source of strength?
4. When you think of generosity, who comes to mind and why?
5. What promises do we have when we give generously, even sacrificially to advance the gospel (verses 17-19)? What would it look like for you to become a more generous person?