

PREVIEWING OUR STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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Chapter One: When Life Gets Real (Acts 9 & 16)

We're going to discover that the believers in Philippi needed a break. They were facing the realities of life and faith, and Paul's letter to their church was just what they needed. In the following chapters we will learn from Paul's "reality check letter" to the Philippians as he taught them the necessary adjustments they needed to make in order not just to survive but *thrive* in real life.

Chapter Two: Real Strength (Philippians 1:6)

When it comes to finding real strength for real life, our default answer tends to be: real strength comes from within. Our culture has done a remarkable job of convincing us that everything is possible if we just have enough self-discipline. But we often discover the sad truth: self can never provide real strength for real life. Self is unreliable and incapable. We're going to learn in this chapter how blessed we are to be in a relationship with a God who abundantly supplies the strength we need to serve Him. Not only are you *in Christ*, but Paul also says that Christ is *in you!*

Chapter Three: Real Decisions (Philippians 1:1-11)

When life gets real, wouldn't it be great to know how to make good decisions rather than just going with your instincts and hoping for the best? Paul says we can actually learn how to make good choices. In this chapter we will start by walking through the first few sections of Paul's letter and learn how we can make great decisions.

Chapter Four: Real Failure (Philippians 1:12-30)

What does it mean to fail as a follower of Jesus? How will we know when we aren't flourishing in our relationship with Him? This question is all-important, because to fail as believers is to miss the real life Jesus offers. In this chapter, we'll first discover what failure *isn't*. We'll then use the image of sailing to learn how we can be in a vibrant relationship with Him.

Chapter Five: Real Focus (Philippians 2:1-11)

If we're honest, we would admit that we tend to look at every person—every situation—and sinfully see them as being able to pull us up a notch or two in the pecking order of life. “What can you do for me?” “What's in it for me?” We have the wrong focus. Paul urges the Philippians to rise above this whole system. He says the best way to live real life is to have a new focus, the same focus that Jesus exemplified for us in Christ's life. In this chapter we will attempt to capture Jesus' unselfish focus—to have Christ's perspective and allow Him to impact the world around us.

Chapter Six: Real Gifts (Philippians 2:12-18)

Gifts stored in the basement may be sentimental and hold some value, but they aren't useful. Paul wants the Philippians to know, as well as us, that the gifts that God has given to us are not only to bring us real life after death, but real life in the here and now. In this chapter we will discover that a gracious God gives us not only the gift of salvation, but the gift of purpose, the gift of power, and the gift of confidence.

Chapter Seven: Real Success (Philippians 2:19-30)

God doesn't use our grading scale to evaluate us. He does not measure success like we do. Paul's letter to the Philippians provides us with great wisdom as we will learn from the lives of two Christian brothers the values that God focuses on to determine our effectiveness for Him. We'll learn from Timothy and Epaphroditus that loving people and being willing to act on their behalf is what true success in God's eyes is all about.

Chapter Eight: Real Goals (Philippians 3:1-16)

In Philippians 3, Paul discusses two paths that he has followed in pursuit of two different goals. He encourages the Philippians to evaluate which goal they are pursuing. In this chapter we will learn that there is an ultimate goal for each of us to make sure we are pursuing. Let's

learn from Paul who encourages us to “press on,” one step at a time, focused on the goal of truly knowing Jesus.

Chapter Nine: Real Leadership (Philippians 3:17–4:1)

Paul writes to the Philippians and urges them to follow his example. He informs them that dealing with real life head on is to accept the fact that we are all leaders, and in fact, we should both have and be spiritual leaders in our pursuit of following Jesus. In this chapter we will be motivated to live a life worthy of the citizenship we have received. We will take seriously our responsibility as citizens: the responsibility of being a leader worth imitating. Then we can say with Paul, “Follow my example!”

Chapter Ten: Real Conflict (Philippians 4:2-7)

Paul writes to the Philippians about two church members in a disagreement. Conflict is inevitable . . . even in the Lord’s church. Paul is an expert on handling conflict, and in this study we will learn what he recommends for us to do when disagreements arise in our relationships.

Chapter Eleven: Real Thinking (Philippians 4:8-9)

A negative mind-set causes a negative action. Think of it like this: *Sow a thought, reap a deed. Sow a deed, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.* In dealing with real life, our thoughts determine our actions . . . and our future! Paul tells the Philippians there is more to real life than just positive thinking; it involves putting every thought we encounter through a filter. In this chapter we will learn the eight checkpoints Paul gives us for our filter to help us determine what we really need to think about—before we reap a destiny that we’re not pleased with.

Chapter Twelve: Real Legacy (Philippians 4:10-23)

6 Paul knows his life is nearing the end. In what might be his final words to the church in Philippi, Paul gives his life strategy. “Take the torch I pass,” Paul says, “and carry on my legacy of faith. Listen carefully, because I have learned the secret to dealing with real life. . . .” Paul has endured good times and bad. In this final study we will learn about the legacy of contentment and the legacy of community. Paul urges the Philippians—and us—to live his legacy. He assures us that, if we do, we’ll experience the *real life* God created us to live and enjoy!

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Previewing Our Study of Philippians

Before you begin . . .

If you are already in a small group at your local church, you're ready. If not, find a few people you trust and can meet with frequently, and start this together!

A few suggestions to maximize your time together:

1. *Spend time with Philippians on your own.* Read it in its entirety every day. As you read, ask questions of the text. Write about how the message intersects with your life. By doing so, you will be able to contribute to your group discussions.
2. *Meet weekly.* Getting together every seven days will keep your group close and your conversation focused. Community deepens by meeting frequently.
3. *When you meet, eat!* Something disarming happens over the table. Stories are shared, laughter flows, friendships deepen. Make this a time to discuss what you learned in your personal study, and how it impacted your week.

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