



THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

PHILIPPIANS OVERVIEW

Small Group Study Guide

This study will potentially take longer to complete than any other study in this series. The reason for this is that you will be asked to read through the entire book of Philippians a number of times. It takes me about fifteen minutes to read through the book once. Before we dig into the specifics and details of the book, it is always beneficial to get a bird's-eye view of the entire book. This will help you keep the details in context with the whole.

I would also like to encourage you to purchase a commentary that will allow you to go deeper in your study of Philippians. Below are a couple resources I recommend:

- ***The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*** by John MacArthur (Moody Press © 2001). This is based on a series of sermons he preached from the book of Philippians.
 - ***The Message of Philippians*** by J. A. Motyer (InterVarsity Press © 1984). This is part of ***The Bible Speaks Today*** (BST) commentary series. This resource is more basic than the others, but its strength is in its emphasis on application.
 - ***Paul's Letter to the Philippians*** by Gordon D. Fee (William. B. Eerdmans Publishing © 1995). This is part of ***The New International Commentary on the New Testament*** (NICNT) commentary series. This is the most technical of the three. Excellent resource for the person who wants to do serious exegetical study.
1. Read through Philippians in one sitting and take notice of the mood and tone of the letter.
 - What is the general tone and mood of Paul's writing to the church in Philippi?
 - Which of the following would you state best depicts the type of letter this is and explain your answer: (a) teacher to student; (b) pastor to congregation; (c) father to son; or (d) friend to friend.

Don't Forget:

Discuss the Sermon Notes from this week

2. Read through Philippians a second time. This time look for key words, themes or concepts that are repeated throughout the letter.
 - Of the words, themes or concepts you have noted, what would you say are the top three concerns of Paul in writing this letter? Be able to explain your answer.
 - The sermon series for Philippians is entitled “The Fellowship of the Gospel.” Since you have now read the letter twice through, do you agree or disagree with this as a summation of the letter’s emphasis? Why or why not?
3. Philippians seems to be in the basic form of the ancient Greek “friendship letter”.¹ The “friendship letter” form contains certain identifiable elements consisting of: (a) an opening greeting; (b) prayer for the recipients of the letter; (c) sharing of the affairs of the sender; (d) request for the recipients to share of their affairs; (e) information about future plans; and (f) a closing wish for health and well-being. In the part that deals with the affairs of the recipients, this is where Paul gives practical instruction on how they are to live as those part of “the fellowship of the gospel.” Read through Philippians again and this time write a short sentence or phrase that summarizes each paragraph.

INTRODUCTORY GREETING AND PRAYER (1:1-11)

- 1:1-2 -
- 1:3-11 -

SHARING OF PAUL’S AFFAIRS (1:12-26)

- 1:12-14 -
- 1:15-18 -
- 1:19-26 -

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING PHILIPPIANS’ AFFAIRS (1:27-2:18)

- 1:27-30 -
- 2:1-11 -
- 2:12-18 -

INFORMATION ABOUT PAUL’S FUTURE PLANS (2:19-30)

- 2:19-24 -
- 2:25-30 -

INSTRUCTION CONCERNING PHILIPPIANS’ AFFAIRS (3:1-4:3)

- 3:1-11 -
- 3:12-16 -
- 3:17-4:1 -
- 4:2-3 -

CLOSING REMARKS (4:4-23)

- 4:4-7 -
- 4:8-9 -
- 4:10-13 -
- 4:14-20 -
- 4:21-23 -

¹Gordon D. Fee, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 2-14.

For Next Week:
Prayerfully meditate and study the following: Philippians 1:1-11