

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 1: CONFIDENT IN CHRIST

Paul is confident in Philippians 1:6 that God will complete the “good work” that he began in the Philippians. This “good work” is salvation. The activities this week focus on how we can be confident of salvation.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 1:1-11

If you can, memorize this week's key verse:

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

DAY 2

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

1. Look at verse 8. How are Christians saved?
2. Can Christians save themselves? Why or why not? (See verses 8 and 9.)
3. What cannot save us? (See verse 9.)
4. Are “good works” (ie: doing good things / not doing bad things) still important for us to do? (See verse 10.)

If you're a Christian, thank God that he has given you the “gift” of faith (verse 8). Praise him for his amazing grace. Ask your Father for growing confidence in him, rather than in your own “works”.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 3: STANDING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

In Philippians 1:27, Paul encourages followers of Jesus to “stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together”. It’s vital that we meet regularly with other believers. This week’s activities focus on that theme.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 1:27 – 2:11

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse: “Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

DAY 2

Read Colossians 3:12-17

1. When “God’s chosen people” meet together (verse 12), how should we treat each other? (See verses 12-14.)
2. Look at verse 13. Why must we forgive one another?
3. Where can we find “the message of Christ” (verse 16)? Practically speaking, how can we “let the message of Christ dwell” in us?
4. Paul says that thankfulness and gratitude for what Christ has done is very important. He mentions it three times (verses 15, 16 and 17). Write down what Christ has done for you, and give thanks to him.

Our witness to a watching world is even more powerful when they see how we love each other. Pray that God would give you a deep love for his people in your prison.

DAY 3

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Think about ways in which you can spur on a fellow believer towards love and good deeds. Ask God to give you strength, by his Holy Spirit, so that you can be an encouragement to the Christian brothers and sisters you know.

DAY 4

Read 1 Peter 2:9-12

1. How does Peter describe Christians in verses 9 and 10?
2. What should Christians be doing together as a result of these descriptions? (See verse 9.)
3. Why does Peter describe Christians as “foreigners and exiles” in verse 11? (See Philippians 3:20 for a clue!)
4. Look at verses 11 and 12. How should “the people of God” behave?
5. What will be the effect when people see Christians living in this way? (See verse 12.)

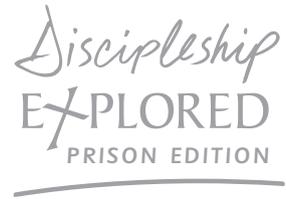
Spend some time reflecting on your new status in Christ (verses 9-11). Thank God for these amazing truths. Ask him to give you Christian friends who can help you live a life in keeping with God’s chosen people.

DAY 5

Get ready for *Discipleship Explored* by reading Philippians 2:12-30.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 4: TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST

In Philippians 2:16, Paul tells the Philippians to “hold firmly to the word of life”. As we hear and obey God’s word, the Bible, it transforms us so that we become more like Christ. This week’s activities focus on the theme of the Bible.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 2:12-30

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse: “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 fulfil his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13).

DAY 2

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Here, Paul is writing to a younger Christian called Timothy.

1. Look at verse 15. What are the “Holy Scriptures” able to do?
2. Paul wrote these words to Timothy. But where does Scripture ultimately come from? (See verse 16.)
3. What does Scripture equip a Christian to do? (See verse 16.)
4. Look at verse 17. Why should we read the Bible?

Thank God that he reveals himself to you through his word, the Bible. Ask him to help you know him better each day, and to be excited by the things he shows you as you read the word he has breathed out.

DAY 3

“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Psalm 119:105).

God’s word guides us, and makes us wise. It helps us know the right choices to make, and the right way to think and live. Ask God to help you trust it more and more over the coming months.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 19:7-8

This psalm was written by David, a famous king of Israel, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.

1. What words are used to describe “the law/statutes of the Lord” (God’s word) in verse 7?

2. What effect will God’s word have on us if we read it? (See verse 7.)

3. What words are used to describe God’s word in verse 8?

4. How will God’s word impact us if we read and obey it? (See verse 8.)

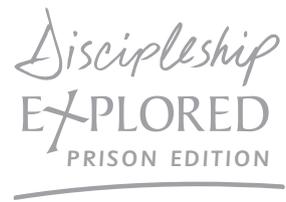
Read the rest of Psalm 19, and notice all the wonderful ways in which God’s word is described. Use the words of the psalm to pray your own prayer.

DAY 5

Get ready for *Discipleship Explored* by reading Philippians 3:1-9.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 5: RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST

In Philippians 3:9, Paul speaks about “the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith”. This week’s activities focus on the theme of righteousness.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 3:1-9

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse: “The righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:9).

DAY 2

Read Romans 3:20-24

In this passage, “declared righteous in God’s sight” (verse 20) means “made right with God”. “The law” (verse 20) means God’s law, the ten commandments.

1. Look at verse 20. What does “the law” do?

2. If the law can’t make us righteous in God’s sight (verse 20), how can we be made righteous? (See verse 22.)

3. How is that made possible? (See verse 24.)

God does not leave our sin unpunished: it was paid for by Jesus when he died in our place.

Because of what happened at the cross, God forgives his people their sin, and gives them the righteousness of Jesus.

Spend some time reflecting on the wonder of this. Thank God that all who repent and believe in Jesus “are justified freely by his grace” (verse 24).

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 6: KNOWING CHRIST

In Philippians 3:10, Paul speaks about his strong desire to “know Christ”. He knows that, even as a Christian, this means he must “press on towards the goal to win the prize” (3:14). This week’s activities will help you think about what it means to “press on” and know Christ better.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 3:10 – 4:1

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse: “I want to know Christ” (Philippians 3:10).

DAY 2

Read Matthew 6:19-24

1. Jesus tells us to store up “treasures in heaven” rather than “treasures on earth”. Why? (See verses 19-20.)
2. Look at Jesus’ words in verse 21. How might we be able to tell what we really value in life?
3. How do you use most of your time and energy? What does this show about where your heart is?
4. In verse 24, Jesus says that no one can serve two masters. What are the things in your life that keep you from knowing Christ better?

When Jesus says: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven”, he is telling us to live wholeheartedly for him. There’s an old poem that helps explain why this is the best way to live:

“Only one life, ‘twill soon be past.
Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

Ask your Father to help you live for things that will last.

DAY 3

“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Christian life can be summed up in four words: “Be who you are!” Or, to put it another way: “You are now in Christ – act like it!”

Ask God for power to live a life that is more like Christ’s.

DAY 4

Read Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus tells a “parable”, which is a short story with a moral.

1. There are two men in this parable. How does Jesus describe them? (See verses 24 and 26.)
2. The men both built houses, but differently. What was different about the way they built? (See verses 24 and 26.)
3. What happened to each man’s house when the storm hit? (See verses 25 and 27.)
4. Is it enough just to hear Jesus’ words? Why or why not? (See verses 24 and 26.)

Many people go to church, or say they are Christian, but they don’t really know Christ. The mark of a genuine believer is whether or not we put God’s word into practice.

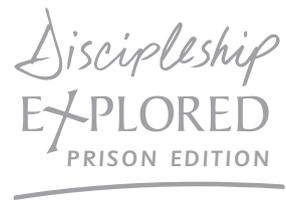
Ask God by his Spirit to make you a person who treats Jesus not only as Saviour, but also as Lord over every part of your life.

DAY 5

Get ready for *Discipleship Explored* by reading Philippians 4:2-9.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 7: REJOICING IN CHRIST

In Philippians 4:6, Paul says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”. There’s a close connection between how much we pray and how much we rejoice. So this week’s activities focus on prayer.



SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 4:2-9

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

DAY 2

Read Matthew 6:5-13

In this passage, Jesus himself teaches his disciples how they should pray.

1. What kinds of things should we avoid when we pray? (See verses 5-8.)
2. Look at verses 9-10. What is the first thing Jesus tells the disciples to do as they pray? (Note: “Hallowed” means “highly honoured”.)
3. How different is this to the way that you usually pray?
4. In verses 11-13, Jesus teaches us to pray for three things in particular. What are they?
5. If “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8), why does Jesus command us to pray?

Pray now, rejoicing that God loves you, and knowing that he hears you.

DAY 3

“If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Jesus, speaking in Matthew 7:11.)

Jesus says that even a sinful, earthly father knows how to give good gifts to his children. Imagine, then, how much more your perfect Father in heaven will give his children good gifts if they ask him!

Ask your Father for whatever “good gifts” you need. Remember that what we want is not always what we need. If you have not been given something you want – even desperately want, to the extent of feeling that you need it – your loving Father has something better in mind for you. “Everything is needful that he sends; nothing can be needful that he withholds” (John Newton).

DAY 4

Read Colossians 1:3-14

In this passage, Paul prays for the Christians living in a place called Colossae.

1. What emotion does Paul express as he prays for these Christians? (See verse 3.)
[Clue: He feels the same way when he prays in Philippians 1:3-4.]

2. Look at verse 9. How often does Paul pray for the Colossians?

3. What does Paul pray for the Colossians? (See verses 9-10.)

4. What can you learn from Paul about how to pray for yourself and others?

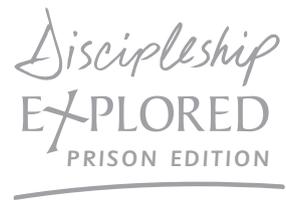
As you pray now, put into practice what you’ve just learned from the way Paul prays.

DAY 5

Get ready for *Discipleship Explored* by reading Philippians 4:10-23.

FOLLOW-UP STUDY 8: CONTENT IN CHRIST

Paul ends his letter to the Philippians by speaking about contentment. He says: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11) – and this, coming from a man who is in prison!



As we reach the end of *Discipleship Explored*, the activities this week focus on how we can remain content, even in difficult circumstances.

SUNDAY

Think over what you heard in the church service today. What did you find most helpful?

DAY 1

Read Philippians 4:10-23

If you can, memorize this week’s key verse: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation” (Philippians 4:12).

DAY 2

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12

Paul is writing to a younger Christian called Timothy.

1. Paul says: “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it” (verses 6-7). Are you living for something that you can’t take with you? How might that affect your contentment?
2. Look at verses 9-10. What else might keep us from being content?
3. What should we do instead, if we want to be content? (See verses 11-12.)

It’s very hard to just “stop” loving money and earthly things. Desire for those things needs to be “driven out” by love for something – or someone – greater.

Ask God to give you a love for Jesus that is more powerful than your love for earthly things. Ask him to open your eyes so that you can see how much more desirable Christ is than anything else.

DAY 3

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

Following Christ means following his lead in every area of your life. Ask your Father in heaven for strength to “live a life of love”, just as your Lord and Saviour did.

DAY 4

Read Colossians 3:1-10

Paul says that it’s not enough for us to have “taken off” our old selves (verse 9). We must also “put on the new self” (verse 10), if we are to experience the contentment Christ brings.

1. Paul says: “Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is”. In other words, Christians should desire and live for those things that are Christ-like. Why is that? (Look at the beginning of verse 1.)
2. What does that mean? (See verse 4.)
3. How should Christians live in the light of that fact? (See the start of verse 5.)
4. Look at verses 5-10. Make a list of the things Paul tells us to turn away from.
5. What will your “new self” (verse 10) look like? Write down words that are the opposite of the ones you wrote down in question 4.

Your contentment as a Christian will depend on setting your heart on things above (verse 1). Pray that God’s Holy Spirit will give you power and self-control to take off the old self, and put on the new. Ask your loving Father to give you deep, lasting contentment as you do that.

DAY 5

Spend some time looking back over these follow-up activities. What can you thank God for? In what ways can you ask his Spirit to help you grow? Pray about these things, thanking him for all he's done for you in Jesus.

Philippians 1:9-11 gives you an idea of what Paul might pray for you right at this moment:

"This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God."

So, what happens next?

- Keep reading!

Keep going with your Bible reading, so that "your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight". The book of James is a great follow-up to Philippians. Why not start to read that, beginning tomorrow?

- Keep praying!

The most joyful Christians are prayerful Christians, because through prayer we become even closer in our friendship with Christ. Paul usually begins his letters with a prayer, and the prayers begin with thanks and gratitude for what God has done. That's a great thing for us to copy as we pray.

- Keep meeting!

Keep meeting regularly with other Christians. The Holy Spirit gives every Christian "spiritual gifts". He gives these gifts so that we can strengthen other believers, and so that others can do the same for us (1 Corinthians 12:7). So "stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). And be encouraged. We're praying for you.

"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. 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." (Philippians 4:8-9)