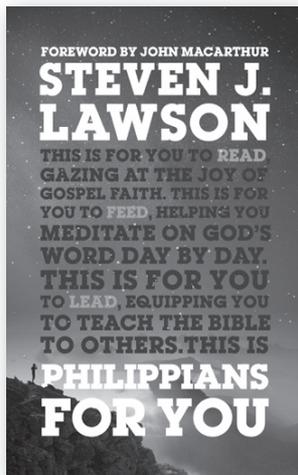




Shining with joy

PHILIPPIANS

by Steven J. Lawson



Philippians For You

If you are reading *Philippians For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Philippians For You*:

Study One → Ch 1-2	Study Five → Ch 9-11
Study Two → Ch 3-5	Study Six → Ch 12-13
Study Three → Ch 6, 8	Study Seven → Ch 14-15
Study Four → Ch 7	

Find out more about *Philippians For You* at:
www.thegoodbook.com/for-you

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The Good Book Guide to Philippians

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, moms and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that’s not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. ☑ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s word.

Why study Philippians?

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4 v 4)

God never commands us to do what he does not enable us to do. And through Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi, in modern-day northeastern Greece, God both tells us to rejoice and also gives us great reason to rejoice—whatever we are facing in life.

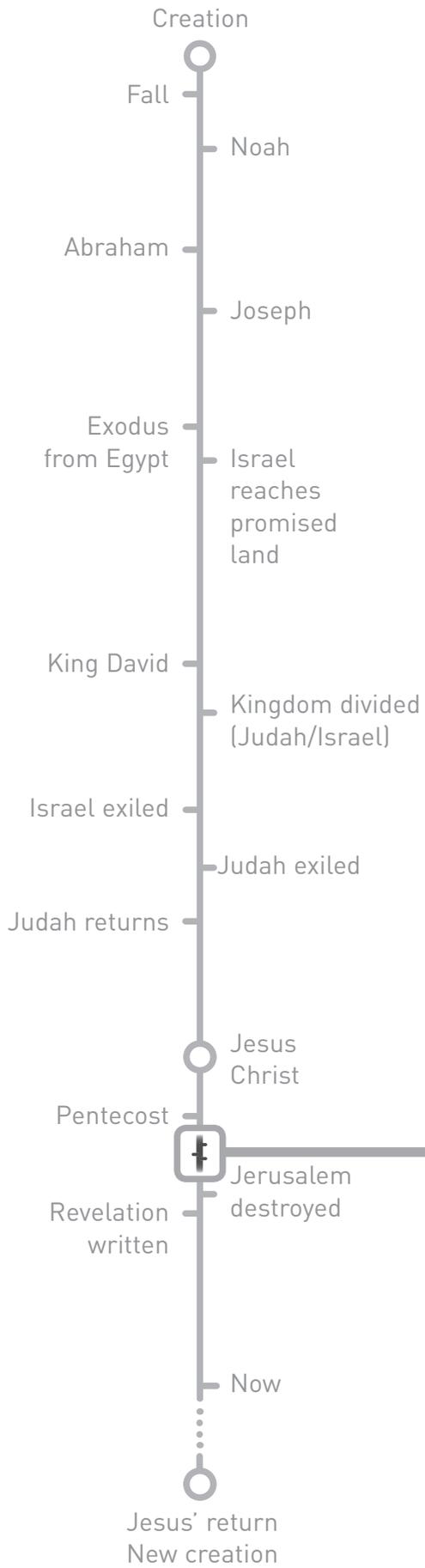
Joy is a spiritual grace that we all need to experience in our Christian lives. We live in a world of stress and anxiety that all too easily and subtly can steal the peace of God from our hearts. We need an abundant, overflowing joy to flood our souls. The book of Philippians is written for that very purpose—to point us to that joy.

It does so by focusing us on the gospel. There is a repeated emphasis upon the good news of salvation that is in God’s Son, Jesus Christ (1 v 5, 7, 12, 16, 27; 2 v 22; 4 v 3, 15). Paul places great stress upon the saving message of the gospel, as well as the need for us to live it out in our daily lives. The believers needed a gospel focus. We are no different.

But Philippians also produces joy in us by showing us how to grow in holiness. This letter teaches us much about how to live the Christian life. Paul will tell us that we bear great responsibility to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (2 v 12-13). At the same time, he will instruct us that it is God who is at work within us for his good pleasure. Expect to grow in a desire for holiness and a life of holiness as you walk through this letter.

It is wonderful to know that the great truths of Philippians apply to us, if we are in Christ Jesus. In these seven studies, you can look forward to learning more and experiencing more of the fullness of what God has prepared for us as his people, so that you may enjoy shining “as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (2 v 15-16).

Note: This Good Book Guide is based on the New American Standard Bible translation, but it has been written in such a way that it works equally well with the English Standard Version and New International Version.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the letter to the Philippians fit into the whole story of God's word?

EPHESIANS c61AD

49-52AD

Paul's second missionary journey takes him to Philippi, where a church is begun

c55AD

Paul makes two more brief visits to Philippi

c61AD

Under house arrest in Rome, Paul writes to the Philippian church

1

Philippians 1 v 1-11

JOY-FILLED PRAYER

talkabout

1. What do you think you can tell about someone from whether they pray, who they pray to, and what they pray?

investigate

 **Read Philippians 1 v 1-8**

2. What is notable about the way the writers of this letter—the apostle Paul and his co-worker Timothy—describe themselves (v 1)?

DICTIONARY

Saints (v 1): holy ones: those who are set apart by, and for, God.

Overseers and deacons (v 1): leaders.

Partakers (v 7): sharers.

- How do they describe the recipients?

explore more

 **Read Acts 16 v 6-40**

Why did Paul go to Philippi (v 6-10)?

Whom did God call to saving faith through Paul (v 11-34)?

What do you think this taught Paul, and this new church, about:

- *who God can save?*
- *what circumstances God can work in?*

3. What is Paul doing, and how is he feeling (v 3-4)?

- Where is Paul as he writes (v 7, see also v 13-14)?

- How does this make his prayer and his emotion in verses 3-4 all the more striking?



getting personal

In the midst of our own adversities, we should never lose sight of praying for others. When offering intercessory prayers, we are diverted away from our own problems to the lives of others. This kind of selfless praying is good medicine for our own troubled souls because it takes our gaze off of ourselves and refocuses it upon others.

Have you experienced this in your own life?

How might you reshape your prayers in light of this?



4. What is the cause of Paul's joyful thanksgiving (v 5, 7)?

5. Why is Paul sure his Christian friends will keep going in their faith (v 6)?

- Why is this confidence necessary for enabling him to pray with joyful thanks?

6. What impression of Paul do these verses give you?

➔ **apply**

7. Given who Christ is and what he offers (v 2), why is it a privilege, rather than oppressive, to be one of his "bond-servants"?



investigate

Read Philippians 1 v 9-11

8. What does Paul's prayer teach us about what love in action looks like?

DICTIONARY

Sincere (v 10): authentic; with integrity.

Blameless (v 10): literally, not stumbling.

getting personal

No matter how doctrinally sound we may be, if we are without love, we are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13 v 1). Without love for others, regardless of how involved we are in Christian activities, we are "nothing."

Does this encourage you, or challenge you, or both?

9. What does Paul's prayer teach us about what the purpose of the Christian life is (v 11)?

The word "sincere" or "pure" (NIV/ESV) in verse 10 comes from two words for "sun" and "to judge." In ancient times, devious merchants would conceal flaws in their expensive pottery with wax. The authenticity of valuable pottery was revealed when held up to the light of the sun—it was "sincere."

10. So what is Paul teaching in verse 10 about what our aim must be as Christians?

➔ **apply**

11. How do the priorities of Paul's prayer here compare with our prayers?

- If or where yours are different, what might this suggest about your view of God, or what matters to you in life?

12. In what areas is your sincerity tested? What would an authentically loving Christian life look like when those tests come?

⬆ **pray**

Use verses 3-6 to thank God for each other, and for the members of your church.

Then use verses 9-11 to pray for one another and for your church. Share any personal circumstances you would like to pray about, discussing together how these verses might shape your prayers for each other.

