

# PHILIPPIANS READING PLAN



*Redeemer Community Church*

SPRING 2021

Dear friends,

We are so glad that you have decided to join us as we study Philippians together this Spring! In the following pages, you will find some helpful tools designed to equip you to glean more from your personal study of God's Word, followed by a reading plan. It is our earnest hope that the Lord would use this study to deepen your understanding of God's Word and your heart's affections for Christ in the months ahead.

The questions provided in the reading plan are meant to further your own personal study. We encourage you to spend some concentrated time personally exploring a passage (and we'd love for you to consider using the HEAR Method, which is described in the following pages) before using our prompts.

Most days, you will be reading small sections of Philippians; however, some days, you will be asked to read passages from other books of the Bible in order to deepen your understanding of what Paul is communicating to this beloved church. We've designed this study to provide you with 5 readings a week, with an opportunity to catch up if you have missed. However, if you complete all of your readings ahead of time, we encourage you to spend time praying through a Psalm and reading through a chapter of Matthew.

Lastly but importantly, this guide has been made for your benefit, so feel free to use it in whatever way would be most beneficial for your walk with the Lord. Praying that the Lord grow us in unity, humility, and unshakable joy in the weeks ahead,

Matt Francisco  
Pastor of Discipleship

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# HOW TO APPROACH THE BIBLE

At Redeemer, we believe that the Holy Scriptures are the unfolding revelation of the greatness and graciousness of the Triune God, they declare the covenant promises of His Kingdom and His people, and they instruct from generation to generation the great deeds of the Lord.

Despite the fact that the Bible was written by 40 authors on 3 continents over thousands of years, it tells one coherent story. From beginning to end, the 66 books of the Bible tell the story of our all-powerful and loving King and Rescuer. This King made us in His image, but we, desiring to take His place, rebelled and incurred his just and holy wrath- but far from that being the tragic end to the story, it was merely the title page. For thousands of years, God's foreordained, perfect plan was coming to fruition. God Himself would come to earth- to live the life required of us, die the death that we deserved, and reconcile us to Himself by His own blood.

The Scriptures are one of God's means of grace to us, written under the inspiration of His Spirit so that we might know Him and enjoy Him forever. As J.I. Packer has written, "The word which God addresses directly to us is an instrument not only of government but also of fellowship. He made us with the intention that we might walk together forever in a love relationship. But such a relationship can exist only when the parties know something of each other. God, our Maker, knows all about us before we say anything; but we can know nothing of him unless he tells us. Therefore, God sends his word...to woo us as well as to instruct us."

This means that the Bible cannot merely be read merely intellectually. There is nothing given to us in the Bible simply to be known. His Word has been given to us that we might know Him through it, and, by the power of His Spirit, be changed into His likeness by it. His Word is a vehicle for your communion with the thrice-holy, living, gracious God, given to you because God wants you to know and love Him, even as He knows and loves you.

# THREE MAIN PRINCIPLES

## *1. Read it prayerfully.*

As you prepare to read, slow down your thoughts and prayerfully remember what you are coming to do: meet with the God who loves you. Begin by asking Him to speak to you, acknowledging that, apart from the power of His Holy Spirit, everything you read will be mere words on a page.

One of the best ways to prepare your heart to meet with the Lord is to begin your time by reading and praying through a Psalm, slowly and meditatively using the verses as a launching point for your prayers.

As Eugene Peterson explained in his book, *Answering God*, left to ourselves, we will always fashion a god after our own image. Unless our prayers are grounded in the Scriptures themselves, we will inevitably focus on the facets of God's character that we most appreciate or that we manage to understand, but in order for us to grow in our relationships with God, we must engage with the fullness of who God is and what prayer is for. The Psalms train us in that conversation, so that we come prayerfully before the Lord as we read.

Coming prayerfully also means coming humbly, remembering the gap between who God is and who we are. We are not communing as equals; it should strike us with wonder that the King of the universe has stooped down to spend time with sinners like us.

Coming humbly entails a willingness to submit in faith and obedience to all of the Bible's declarations- even the ones we don't like, are confused by or would rather ignore. Since we believe that the Scriptures are trustworthy, complete, and the primary source for equipping the Christian in faith and service to God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), everywhere the Spirit leads a Christian today is in perfect harmony and unity with the Scriptures- even when it could get us into trouble- because the humble obedience to God's Word is what it looks like to submit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ.

## *2. Read it patiently.*

You know a date didn't go well if your date talks at you for five minutes and then left, right? Likewise, it probably wasn't a good date if your date was constantly on their phone, checking their messages or the latest score. Often, in order to have a meaningful conversation with someone, you have to wait for the cobwebs to clear out. Sometimes you wade through small talk before you dig into the meat of a conversation.

If God is a person- which He is- why do we so often act as though our relationship with Him operates in a different way? Wherever you are in your relationship with God, commit to carving out increments of undistracted time, where you can pour out your heart to Him and where you are quiet long enough to hear from Him.

## *3. Read it persistently.*

Just like learning to play the piano, there is no substitute for the regular "work" of meeting with God in His Word and prayer. You may not notice your own spiritual growth in a day or even a month, but like children growing into adults, over the course of time, by regularly meeting with the Lord, a genuine, general pattern of growth will emerge. Take heart and take the long view- you literally have an eternity to grow in intimacy with God.

# APPROACHING A PASSAGE

*Context is King.* The most helpful tool you have in interpreting the meaning of a passage is its context. Begin with the question, “How do the surrounding verses give insight into what this passage seems to be saying?” and then, “How does this passage fit into this book as a whole?” Having a good study Bible to read about the author, the audience, and the setting is incredibly useful as well. It is important for us to realize in interpretation that a passage will never mean something for you that it never could have meant for its original hearers.

*Think “Reading Comprehension 101.”* Before you spend time on the pieces that are most interesting or confusing to you, first seek to answer the question “What’s the main point of this passage?” and try to explain it in your own words.

*Interpret Scripture with Scripture.* In addition to our other context questions, we can ask, “How does it fit into the Scriptures overall?” If you have a study Bible, the cross references listed will point you to other verses in Scripture that speak to similar themes or use similar words.

*Community.* At Redeemer, we often say “theology is best done in community.” Therefore, we encourage you to read and interpret as you study alongside mentors, friends, and believers throughout history.

# THE HEAR METHOD

The most important thing in beginning Bible study is simply to come before the Lord prayerfully, patiently, and persistently. However, whether we realize it or not, each of us has a “method” in how we approach God’s Word, and some methods are more helpful than others. The HEAR Method was developed by Robby Gallaty, and we have found it particularly useful, because it sets the table well for any Christian, providing the tools necessary to mine a spiritual gem in 10 minutes, as well as to dig deep for an hour.

## Highlight, Explain, Apply, Respond.

**Highlight:** What is the main point? Is there a verse or phrase that captures it?

**Explain:** What does this passage mean? Try to write to summarize its meaning in your own words. A proper interpretation of any passage must:

- Be clearly reflected in the text
- Be timeless
- Not be culturally bound
- Correspond to the rest of Scripture
- Be relevant both to the Biblical audience as well as a contemporary audience

### *A Few Questions to Ask to Uncover the Meaning of a Passage*

- What do the key terms mean?
- How do the verses or phrases relate to each other?
- How does this passage fit into the larger story of the book it is in?
- How does this passage relate to the story of the Bible as a whole?
- How does this passage speak about or point to Jesus or our need?

**Apply:** How should this passage apply to my life today?

- Is there an application already in the text?
- Is there sin to confess, promise to claim, command to obey?
- What would the application of this verse practically look like in my life today?

**Respond:** Is there anything I need to remember, rejoice in, request, or repent of?

- How does this show me something about the character of God for which I can praise him? (What happens in my life when I forget this?)
- How does this show me something wrong with me—some sin of which this convicts me—for which I can repent? (How does my faith and salvation in Christ help me escape this?)
- How does this show me something that I need that I should be petitioning God for? (What do I lack in my life that I should seeking?)

# BACKGROUND ON THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

*From the ESV Study Bible*

## ***Author, Date, and Recipients***

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi, probably from Rome c. A.D. 62.

## ***Theme***

Paul encourages the Philippians to live as citizens of a heavenly city, growing in their commitment to serve God and one another. Jesus is the supreme example of this way of life. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus try to be good examples as well.

## ***Purpose***

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. He had several purposes in mind: (1) to tell them that Epaphroditus had recovered from a serious illness; (2) to encourage them in their faith; (3) to assure them that he was still in good spirits; and (4) to thank them for their continued support

## ***Key Themes***

Christians need to keep making spiritual progress (1:12, 25; 3:12–16).

Such progress requires a proper spiritual outlook (1:5–11; 2:1–11; 3:7, 15; 4:7–9).

Christ is the supreme example for the Christian. Mature Christians can also serve as role models (1:12–26; 2:5–11, 19–30; 3:3–17; 4:9).

Suffering will come, but Christians can still be joyful (1:12–26; 2:14–15; 4:4, 11–13, 19).

Prayer is crucial for maintaining a joyful Christian life (1:3–11; 4:5–7).

Christians can enjoy rich relationships with one another; they can be united in service to promote the gospel (1:4, 7, 24–27; 2:1–4, 19–30; 4:2–4, 14).

Keeping the law cannot provide a right standing with God; believers are saved only through their faith in Jesus Christ (3:2–10).

Jesus is fully God and fully man. Because of his suffering on the cross, he is now glorified as Lord and Christ (2:5–11).

# WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

*“God the Creator taking creation from its original flawless state through its current sin-marred (though still lovely) state to its final glorious state by means of His personal (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) comprehensive (people, places, creatures, and things) redemptive (from sin and decay) work that He shares with His servants, His people.” –Paul House, Beeson Divinity School*

1. We were created for relationship with God and to reflect God to the world.

*Colossians 1:16, Isaiah 43:7, Genesis 1:17-28*

2. We have been ruined by our rebellion.

*Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23*

3. We have been rescued and reconciled through Jesus Christ.

*2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:4-5*

4. We now reflect Christ and restore His world together with Him.

*2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Revelation 21:3-4, Philippians 2:9-11*

## **GOD SAVES SINNERS**

**GOD** – the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father’s will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of Father and Son by renewing.

**SAVES** – does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies.

**SINNERS** – men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God’s will or better their spiritual lot. God saves sinners... sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but that salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; amen.”

*–J.I. Packer, “Introductory Essay,” in *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, by John Owen*







# WEEK FOUR

MEMORIZE *Philippians 2:7-8*

## Day 1: 1 Peter 4:12-16

1. Should we as believers expect persecution and suffering in this life? What is the distinction between “suffering” and “suffering for Christ?”
2. According to verse 14, what is our comfort when we are being persecuted for following Jesus?

## Day 2: *Philippians 1:18b-26*

*“If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.”*

– Charles Spurgeon

1. What does Paul mean when he says that he knows “this will turn out for my deliverance” (verse 19)? What “deliverance” is he talking about?
2. Meditate deeply on Paul’s words, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” What in your life would keep you from being able to say the same? Spend some time honestly wrestling with the Lord about the things in your life that compete with your heart’s affections for Christ and ask God for the grace to lay them down. Then try to rewrite “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” in your own words.
3. What does Paul mean when he says, “to die is gain?” Do you believe it too? What would make dying gain?

## Day 3: 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:9

1. “Jars of clay” was a common metaphor in the ancient world for human weakness (ESV Study Bible). Knowing this, what does 4:7 teach us about how God works in our weakness? How have you struggled to believe this? Spend some time praising God that His strength is perfect in our weakness.
2. How does encourage the Corinthians to endure hardship and persecution according to 4:16-18? What would it look for the Spirit to take these words deeper into your heart? How would it affect your day-to-day or your outlook on life?

## Day 4: *Philippians 1:27-30*

1. What does it mean to live a life worthy of the gospel?
2. Remember that this letter was not written merely to individual Christians, but to the church as a whole. Who is Paul calling the Philippian believers to strive side by side with? What are the implications for you, me, and Redeemer?
3. What would it look like to strive side by side alongside the church? What in your life or in your community might need to change in order to make that happen?
4. How do we grow in becoming one spirit and one mind, not just with our friends or family members, but with our covenant church community?
5. In verse 28, Paul mentions a “clear sign?” In light of the questions above, what is the “clear sign” he is referring to?

## Day 5: *Acts 9*

1. How does being granted not only belief but also suffering change how you view suffering?

## TAKE NOTES

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# WEEK SIX

MEMORIZE *Philippians 3:9-10*

## Day 1: *Philippians 2:9-11*

1. How is Jesus's humility tied to his exultation? How is ours (See Luke 14:10-11 and Luke 18:14 for help)?
2. What does it mean that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (See Daniel 7:9-14 and 1 Peter 2:12)?
3. What encouragement can you draw from knowing that this is not a mere hope or wish, but an unconditional certainty?

## Day 2: *Philippians 2:12-18*

1. Before you read verses 12-18, be sure to reread 2:9-11 for context. Following 9-11, what does Paul mean when he calls believers to work out our salvation with fear and trembling?
2. How does the fact that "God works in you," deepen our understanding of working out our salvation with fear and trembling? (Reread *Philippians 1:6*, and after responding on your own, read through the note from the *ESV Study Bible* below).

*Phil. 2:12-13 The Philippians have obeyed (cf. Christ's obedience, v. 8) in the past and should continue to do so as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They cannot be content with past glories but need to demonstrate their faith day by day as they nurture their relationship with God. But while God's justice is a cause for sober living ("fear and trembling"), it is not as though Paul wants the Philippians to be anxious that they can never be good enough to merit God's favor. Rather, it is God's love and enabling grace that will see them through: it is God who works in you. They can rejoice in God's empowering presence even as they work hard at living responsible Christian lives. While v. 12 may seem to suggest salvation by works, it is clear that Paul rejects any such teaching (cf. 3:2-11). In 2:12 Paul means "salvation" in terms of progressively coming to experience all of the aspects and blessings of salvation. The Philippians' continued obedience is an inherent part of "working out" their salvation in this sense. But as v. 13 demonstrates, these works are the result of God's work within his people, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Even the desire ("to will") to do what is good comes from God; but he also works in the believer to generate actual choices of the good, so that the desires result in actions. (On fear of*

*God, see notes on Acts 5:5; 9:31.).*

3. How does "holding fast to the word of life" impact our complaining or grumbling?
4. Should there be a difference between laying our complaint among believers and God (think of the Lament Psalms) versus grumbling before the world? If so, what should that look like?

## Day 3: *Hebrews 3:13-15, 10:21-25, 12:1-3*

## Day 4: *Philippians 2:19-30*

1. How do you see the truths of *Philippians 2:1-11* exemplified in 2:19-30?
2. What would be cheerful news to Paul concerning the Philippians?
3. How does this passage give us an idea about Paul's love for the Philipian church? How does that encourage or challenge you? How can we grow in loving other believers like Paul does?

## Day 5: *Acts 13*

## TAKE NOTES

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# WEEK EIGHT

MEMORIZE *Philippians 3:20*

## Day 1: *Philippians 3:12-16*

1. Read back through verses 10-11. What is Paul's goal in those verses and how does that shape his "straining forward?"
2. What does it look like for you to "forget what lies behind" and strain forward towards what is ahead?
3. Should we forget our sins or remember our sins? In *Philippians 3:13-14*, Paul says, "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on." Once you try to answer these questions on your own, read the following from John Piper: (<https://www.desiring-god.org/interviews/does-god-remember-our-sins-or-forget-them>)

*"So Paul says, 'I forget. I am not paralyzed by the horrible memories of the fact that I was killing Christians. I was throwing them in prison. I was shaking my fist in the face of God. I am forgetting all of that, and I am pressing on.'"*

*However, he wrote in *Ephesians 2:11-12*, "Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands — remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."*

*Well, Paul, which is it? Are we supposed to remember what it was like for us before we were saved — how horrible that was and what horrible things we did? Or are we supposed to forget those things which lie behind? I think what Paul would say is we forget them and we remember them according to what is good for us. When he says remember them, he says, "Remember them for your humbling, not for your paralysis. Remember them for your deeper enjoyment of grace, not because of your destruction."*

4. Where do we find the strength to press on toward the goal for the prize (see *1 Corinthians 9:24-27* for help)?

*Phil. 3:15* talks about those who are mature. "Mature" (Gk. *teleios*) is the same adjective translated "perfect" in v. 12 ("not ... perfect"). Thus, Paul is saying, in effect, "If you are really perfect/mature, you will realize you are not yet perfect/mature!" (*ESV Study Bible*)

## Day 2: *Psalms 39, James 4:13-17*

1. What themes do these two passages have in common?
2. What does the fleeting nature of life mean for us today?
3. Re-read yesterday's *Philippians* verses in light of these passages. How does Paul seem to view his own life? How should we think about our lives?

## Day 3: *Philippians 3:17-19*

1. Who are some of the godliest people you know? What are their lives like?
2. What would it look like for you to follow their example in godliness?
3. According to this passage, what are some of the signposts that we might be following earthly things?
4. Many commentators argue that Paul is describing those who glory in their shame as those Christians who use their freedom in Christ as an excuse for sin. How instead are we to use our Christian freedom? Is there anything in your life that you feel the need to justify in explaining to others? In light of this passage, *1 Corinthians 10:23-31*, and *Romans 16:18*, how do we discern whether we are using our Christian freedom to bring glory to God or serve our own appetites?

## Day 4: *Philippians 3:19-21*

1. What are the consequences of setting your citizenship in heaven?
2. What are aspects of our lowly body versus aspects of our future glorious body?

## Day 5: *Colossians 3:1-4*

1. What does it mean that you have been raised with Christ and that your life is hidden in Him?
2. What are some things above that you ought to set your minds on?
3. What are some earthly things that should take up less of your mind?
4. Spend some time praising God that your life is inseparably connected to Christ's, and ask Him to set your mind and heart on the things of His mind and heart.



# WEEK TEN

MEMORIZE *Philippians 4:6-7*

## Day 1: *Philippians 4:10-13*

*“For my own part, I have never ceased to rejoice that God has appointed me to such an office. People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice”* –David Livingstone, missionary to Africa for 40 years

1. What allows Paul to be content in any circumstance?
2. In what ways have you seen your contentment be situationally dependent? What do you think the Lord was doing in those circumstances?
3. What do you think: is it easier to be content in a state of abundance or need? Do you think Paul finds one easier than the other?
4. Spend some time asking the Lord to anchor your joy and contentment in Himself, rather than any earthly circumstance.

## Day 2: *Ephesians 3:14-21*

1. Where does Paul’s strength come from? What is his strength for?
2. What do you think it means to be “filled with the fullness of God?” What does this have to do with yesterday’s passage in Philippians?
3. Take some time to use Paul’s prayer as a springboard for praying for the members of your Home Group, your friends, and family.

## Day 3: *2 Corinthians 12:7-10*

*“All our difficulties are only platforms for the manifestations of His grace, power, and love”*  
–Hudson Taylor, missionary to China

1. There is lots of speculation about what precisely is the “thorn” in Paul’s side. Whatever it may be, Paul gives us an indication about its purpose. What is that purpose of his affliction?
2. What hope does Paul have for his ministry despite this thorn? What hope can you have despite your thorns?
3. How is it possible that Paul can say that he boasts in his weaknesses? How does this differ from boasting in sin that grace may abound (see Romans 6:1-4)?
4. In what ways is God’s power made perfect in your weakness?

## Day 4: *Philippians 4:14-23*

1. What needs will God meet? Why can Paul write this with such confidence?
2. What are God’s riches in glory in Christ Jesus?
3. What can you hope in today?

## Day 5: *Psalms 23*

1. What does the psalmist believe about God’s provision? What about His protection?
2. What can we draw from God’s portrayal as shepherd and host?
3. Where does the psalmist get to feast with God? Do you sit intimately with the Lord in the midst of sufferings?

## TAKE NOTES

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