

WEEKNIGHT STUDY | church on the drive

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9



Socially distant, spiritually connected - This week we want to remain connected to each other through prayer and study, even though we may be physically distant from each other. Take time to call people in your small group and talk with them about this week's message or tonight's bible study, which is based on this Sunday's message. You are invited to take out a journal and record your thoughts through this bible study and share them with others!

1. Prayer

- a. Thank God for today and all that you got to enjoy as part of it
- b. Pray for people you love
- c. Pray for people you have trouble loving
- d. Ask God's help during this COVID-19 pandemic - for you, for our city, for our world
- e. Pray for our leaders - government and church
- f. Ask God to help you minister to those around you in the best possible way

2. Context for Philippians

- a. Watch this video for context on Paul's letter to the Philippians: vimeo.com/195665039
 - i. The Christian community in Philippi had been founded by Paul himself in the early 50s of the first century. (see Acts 16) Silas, Timothy, and Luke all came with him around 51 CE, met a group of faithful Jewish women in Philippi, and established there the first Christian congregation in Europe. Among the first believers who struggled alongside Paul in ministry were Lydia, Euodia, Syntyche and Clement. Young Timothy played a significant role in Philippi as well.
 - ii. Paul's experiences in Philippi were not all that pleasant. There was much conflict and even imprisonment. (The good news was that Paul eventually converted his jailer, though!) Eventually the authorities asked Paul to leave so he headed west to Thessalonica, leaving Luke in charge. After leaving Philippi, he faced difficult experiences in other cities, but kept receiving support and encouragement from the church in Philippi.
 - iii. When he wrote the letter, Paul was in prison in Rome and was writing to express his gratitude for a monetary gift sent to him by the Philippians through their friend, Epaphroditus. They had heard he was in prison and not doing well so, as usual, they sent him a gift.
 - iv. When they wrote the letter, the Philippians themselves were undergoing considerable difficulties.
 1. Opponents of the Christian community were causing great stress
 2. "Judaizers" (who held that Christians had to follow the law as a Jew before becoming a Christian) were becoming an influence in the city

3. Physical needs were producing anxiety among the members
 4. Members were wondering if their faith in Christ would be enough to sustain them.
 5. There was a spirit of disagreement, distrust and self-seeking.
 6. The leadership of the church, particularly Euodia and Syntyche, had fallen into the sin of dissension and the health of the church had deteriorated.
- b. Summarizing Paul in chapter four, the video says, "There's always something that you could complain about, but a follower of Jesus knows that all of life is a gift and can choose to see beauty and grace in any life circumstance."
- i. **What areas are you choosing to see beauty and grace in the middle of this season of social distancing? How can you help others see that same beauty and grace?**

3. Read Philippians 4:4-7

- a. 4:4 - Neither Paul's difficult circumstances nor the frightening dangers the Philippians faced can be allowed to eclipse Christian joy as the mark of faith. He's not talking about superficial happiness that comes when things go the way we plan or in a way that pleases us. Paul is talking about the type of rejoicing that can always be had because it does not depend on changing circumstances, but on the one who never changes: Jesus.
 - i. "Rejoice" is the first of four admonitions in this section
- b. 4:5 - Genuine Christian joy is not inward-looking or self-seeking. It is only in focusing on meeting the needs of others *instead of* our own need for happiness that we can learn to rejoice. Your approach to others will determine how gently you deal with them.
 - i. Paul wants to be clear that followers of Jesus should be guided by a frame of mind that does not prioritize self. (see Matt 22:34-40)
 - ii. "Let your gentleness be evident" is the second of four admonitions
 - iii. **How might being gentle with others meet their needs and bring you joy?**
- c. 4:6 - Not only does Paul call the church to put away their anxiousness about the suffering currently coming their way, he gives them a way to overcome it. Praying and asking God with thanksgiving in their hearts, he says, is the key.
 - i. "Do not be anxious" and "present your requests to God" are the third and fourth of four admonitions in this section
 - ii. **Does prayer alleviate your anxiety about situations? When has prayer helped you get through a difficult moment or time?**
- d. 4:7 - The "And" that kicks off verse seven shows us that verse seven is the result of praying a prayer like Paul suggests in verse six.
 - i. **What is the peace of God? How would you describe it to someone? Have you ever experienced it?**

4. Read Philippians 4:8-9

- a. **What are some things in your life that match the list in verse eight?**

b. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have seen the right type of behavior in front of them because he and others have modeled it for them, even during very difficult times! They have no excuse for improper behavior. If they will live in the way that has been modeled for them, Paul promises them peace. The peace of God will not just be with them, the God who supplies that peace will be with them as well.

i. **Who has been a good model of Christian virtue for you? Who is a person that has modeled following Jesus well even in tough times for you?**

5. Reflection

a. There are four truths that undergird Paul's writing in Philippians 4:4-9

i. The Lord is near

ii. God is in control and merciful

iii. The world belongs to God

iv. Those who live in the world can be obedient to God by following Jesus, God's revelation.

b. **Reflecting on the four truths listed above, how should we approach God during this time of pandemic?**

6. This week: Write down a list of things in your life that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy. Place it somewhere in your home where you have to see it. Put a reminder on your phone. Talk with your family about the things you write on the list. Do whatever you can to keep your mind on those things.

7. Pray for Church on the Drive and your loved ones