



Sing hymn 168: Onward, Christian Soldiers
 We are the Lord's soldiers fighting this spiritual warfare together with Him. In order to fight it effectively we need to protect ourselves with the full armor of God. Wherever we go in life, whatever we do, we need to ensure that we bring the truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the word of God with us. Only by doing so will we be thoroughly equipped and well-prepared to fight this spiritual fight. May the Lord bless each one of us so that we will be strong Christian soldiers.

Lesson 6

Philippians

Listed Scriptures

Philippians; Acts 16:6-40

Lesson Aim

- 1) To rejoice in the midst of adversity.
- 2) To imitate Jesus Christ.
- 3) To prioritize God as first in our lives.

Memory Verse

"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ." (Phil 3:8)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Phil 1-4

BIBLE BACKGROUND



Paul wrote this epistle while first imprisoned in Rome, circa 62 AD. The church in Philippi was abundant in love and often supplied Paul's missionary needs. Upon hearing of his arrest, the Philippians gathered money and other necessities and sent them to Paul. Epaphroditus delivered the Philippians' gifts but fell ill, either along the way or while in Rome. Upon recovery, he was sent back to Philippi and delivered this letter from Paul.

The church in Philippi was the first established in the province of Macedonia, and thus, in Europe. During his second missionary journey, Paul left Troas in the province of Asia and traveled to Macedonia in response to a vision from God (Acts 16:8-10). Normally Paul and Silas would preach at the local synagogue, but apparently none was established in Philippi because they went outside the city gate to find the prayer gathering. This indicates the Jewish population was slight at that

time, since according to Jewish regulation a synagogue may be established if there are at least 10 Jewish men living in a particular locale. Paul and Silas met with the group of women who were praying and worshiping during Sabbath, and Lydia and her household became the first Christian converts in all of Europe (Acts 16:14-15). Later, a Philippian jailer and his family were also converted (Acts 16:16-34).

Philippi, named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, was situated strategically on a major crossroad called the Egnation Way, which connected Europe to Asia. It was also fortunate in natural resources; numerous springs and goldmines were in the area. Under Roman rule, Philippi was granted the highest status of a provincial city, which was as a Roman colony, and given special privileges. People born in this city were considered Roman citizens. Residents could buy, own and transfer property. They had the privilege of filing civil lawsuits in Roman courts, and they were exempted from paying poll and land taxes.

W A R M U P



School, friends, parents, relatives, church. They can be sources of stress or pressure, but how the stress and pressure affect us and how we handle them differ depending on the situation. Ask the J2 students to think back to the times when they remained calm and levelheaded, like when two of their friends argued and they remained the voice of reason. Or when they had a big school project to finish or the SATs to take. Between life skills and spiritual knowledge, how do they diffuse stress and find a sense of peace?

Ask the students if they understand the distinction between joy and happiness. Do they say that joy comes from within, while happiness comes from without, that joy needs no cause for effect, but happiness does? Ask students to share their response.



Teachings of Philippians

The letter to the Philippians is nicknamed the “Letter of Joy” because it details Paul’s joy in the Lord in spite of tribulations. It contains no deep philosophical teachings, but Paul encourages the Philippians to strengthen their faith by showing them, through his own life, that true joy comes only from Jesus Christ. No form of trials dampens his zeal and love for God. Difficulties are not reasons to turn aside from Jesus’ standards and expectations. Instead, these adversities teach Paul to be content in all circumstances.

Philippians is a rather distinctive letter that delves into the satisfaction of Christian lives and encourages believers that regardless of the circumstances we can still hold onto Jesus as our greatest treasure and find joy in and through God.



A. Rejoice in the Midst of Suffering

Although Paul talks about rejoicing in the midst of suffering from the beginning of the letter, the most important point is made at the end. Rejoicing during the low points of our lives seems paradoxical. But Paul’s life is a testament that this can be achieved. How? Through God who gives him strength (4:13). And what does God give him strength for? Contentment. Whatever the circumstance, easy or difficult, God can guide us through it. When life is smooth, we need Him to keep us humble and content to enjoy the blessing. When life is difficult, we need Him to keep us faithful and confident in His good will for us. In good times and bad, He can give us the strength for self-control, peace of mind, and a calm, quiet heart.

Echoing the message of unity in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul may be suffering physically but spiritually, he is rejoicing (2:17-18). He is one with Jesus and with the fellowship of believers. He finds joy in the Philippians’ partnership in spreading the gospel (1:4-6). He is also joyful for their belief and progress in faith (1:7, 9-11, 19-26). He rejoices in the brothers who see his grace under adversity and are encouraged to take up the cross for the sake of the gospel (1:12-14). And he is comforted by the Philippians’ sympathy, prayers and gifts (2:25; 4:14-18). He encourages them to continue to be united in their Savior, in the Spirit, in the gospel, in love, and in their actions.

B. Imitate Christ

Imitating Jesus Christ is an aspect of being united in Him. We are all parts of His body and thus should work for the greater good of the body, which is the church. By following His incredible example of what a godly person should be, we can shine as the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gen 22:17-18; Heb 11:11-12).

a. Humility (2:3-11)

Of course, Jesus Christ is the best example of humility. It is one of the greatest aspects of His life of love towards God and towards mankind. He did not place His needs above others. The Philippians were a generous church, and Paul reminds them that their charity is not in vain because they follow Jesus Christ's example. And if they share with Jesus Christ in life, then they will share with Him in death.

When your best friend needs someone to talk to, it's natural to listen and be there for him or her. That's an example of love and humility. It isn't always this easy to show humility, of course, but as Paul said, God gives us strength. And if you make a concerted effort, He'll help you follow through. And even better, He can make use of us without us knowing it. An unconscious act of kindness, which seems nothing personally, can mean a lot to the recipient or someone who witnesses it. We only need to be a vessel that God can make use of (2 Tim 2:21).

b. Shining (2:12-15; 3:12; 4:8-9)

Salvation is a continual process, and as we spiritually mature, obedience to God shouldn't be predicated by the presence of church leaders but rather by an understanding that God enlightens within each of us. Our actions should show us as children of God, spiritual heirs of Abraham. If the world is argumentative, discordant and depraved, we should be peaceful, uncomplaining and pure. As the light of the world, we should strive for whatever brings glory to Jesus Christ (Mt 5:14-16).

c. Two Examples (2:19-30)

Paul mentions Timothy and Epaphroditus in regards to sending them to Philippi. Epaphroditus delivered the current letter, and Paul hoped to send Timothy to check on the congregation. They are also two examples of men who imitate Christ in humility and who shine like stars in their actions.

In Paul's eyes, Timothy is genuinely concerned for others and wholeheartedly serves the gospel. He shows loyalty and respect to Paul, and he is devoted in helping Paul's ministry. Epaphroditus is a fellow worker and soldier in spreading the

gospel. He does holy work, supports it and risks his life for it.

C. Prioritize Jesus Christ as First

There is no doubt that Paul placed Jesus Christ first in his life. After Jesus Christ called him out, his purpose in life was to spread the gospel. There was no thought about a career or about making money. Paul had the prestige of his Jewish lineage and his position as a Pharisee, but he turned away from man's praise in exchange for Jesus (3:3-9). He redefined and reprioritized his life because he understood and deeply appreciated the salvation of Jesus Christ (3:10-11).

And in placing Jesus first in our lives, we have a wonderful goal that we're pressing towards. An eternal life with our benevolent Savior awaits, but we need to live up to what He has given us: salvation. We need to be more concerned with godly matters than earthly matters (3:12—4:1).

J2 students shouldn't feel overwhelmed by the idea that Jesus Christ wants to be first in our lives. It's a continual struggle, especially when they have ambitions and obligations in this world. J2 students are struggling with balancing school, a social life and God, and between what they and what their parents want, Jesus Christ doesn't always make it to the top of the list. But if they place God first, He'll never have them regret it.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1** What is the main theme in the epistle to the Philippians?
- 2** How do we rejoice in the midst of our suffering?
- 3** How can we imitate Jesus Christ?
- 4** Why do we need to imitate Jesus Christ?
- 5** What did Paul gain by placing Jesus Christ first in his life?



Part A: Influence Survey

Who holds the greatest sway on what you think, do and say?

Step 1:

Rate each of the following according to the degree of influence they have on your thinking and behavior. Place an "X" in the category that applies.

Step 2:

Now go back and put a + or - to the left of each influence listed to indicate whether the influence is mostly positive (+) or negative (-). If you think the influence is neither positive nor negative, put a 0 instead.

+ , - , or 0	Influence	None	A Little	A Lot	Too Much
	Mom				
	Dad				
	School Friends				
	Siblings				
	Preacher				
	Lord Jesus				
	Church Brothers and Sisters				
	Relatives				
	Internet				
	Television				
	Movies				
	Magazines				
	Music				
	Books				

Ask the J2 students to share in class and elaborate in what way these influences affect them. How can they eliminate or reduce the negative influences? Are there any other influences that weren't listed? What trends or conclusions do they make?

*Please ask everyone to keep the sharing confidential.

Part B: Match Game

What are the students' perspectives on Paul's life and this letter? How do they see it in relation to them?

Step 1:

Pick one student to be the "matcher."

Step 2:

Give all the students the first question and ask them to write down their answers. For example, "If you were Paul, what is the one thing you most hope the Philippians will send to you?"

Step 3:

After everyone has written down their answer, have your matcher display his/her response first and explain why he/she chose it.

Step 4:

Then have the other students show their answers and see how many of the answers match the matcher's. Give points for however many answers match the matcher's. Have the ones with non-matching answers explain their choices. This is a good way for students and teachers to see how everyone thinks.

Step 5:

Repeat steps 1-4 with the next "matcher" using the questions below.

Other possible questions:

1. If you were a Philippian, what is one thing you would send Paul?
2. If you had to choose between living for Christ or dying for gain, which would you choose?
3. If you were Paul, what would be your greatest hardship as a prisoner?
4. If you went on a missionary trip, what is one item you would definitely take?
5. If you went on an extended missionary trip, what is one care-package item you hope your church peers would send you?
6. What seems like a more difficult sacrifice to you: money or prestige?
7. What aspect of Jesus Christ's love personally impacts your actions the most?
8. Which of the Hebrews 11 people of faith do you most admire?
9. If you were a Philippian, what would you do to support the holy workers?
10. What would you do to support the holy workers today?
11. What Bible story about prayer personally impacts you the most?



Although Paul was in prison, his letter to the Philippians frequently mentioned the joy he has in spite of his suffering. Being united with Christ in his life, he is given the strength to find peace and contentment in any circumstance. And Paul reminds the Philippians of his conviction in the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ's salvation. 12 students are young adults and a world of independence and possibilities await them. It's sobering to think of all their life decisions in relation to death and judgment day. But the inevitability of God isn't meant to frighten but to comfort. Paul never thought of Jesus Christ and death as dreaded ends; he saw them as indescribable joy and a far greater existence. And although Paul mentions working out salvation "with fear and trembling," Jesus Christ was always a positive motivation in his life of faith. God wants to be the same for us. Through the ups and downs in our lives, God wants to be a positive motivation on our spiritual focus so that we may progress in faith.

Colossians

Listed Scriptures

Colossians

Lesson Aim

- 1) To help students understand the background and main teachings of Colossians.
- 2) To encourage students to be rooted and built up in Christ.
- 3) To encourage students to pursue a life of renewal in Christ.

Memory Verse

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving." (Col 2:6-7)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Col 1-4

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



Colosse was a minor city, situated in the fertile Lycus Valley by a mountain pass about 100 miles east of Ephesus in Asia Minor. Colosse was an important center of commerce and was well-known for its glossy black wool. The area was rich in mineral deposits and subject to frequent earthquakes. However, by the time of Paul, the city of Colosse was already in decline in terms of its vibrancy and prominence.

Paul wrote the letter to the Colossian church circa 61 AD while imprisoned in Rome. Paul had never visited this church, as indicated in verses 1:7, 2:1 and 4:12. It is possible that the church in Colosse was founded by a Colossian believer, Epaphras. Epaphras came to visit Paul during his imprisonment in Rome. The Colossian's visit and report prompted Paul to write a letter to the church in Colosse.