



# Mining God's Word

## How to Study the Bible



INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



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## *How to Study the Bible*

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## Mining God's Word

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#### INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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# Instructor's Introduction

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It is our hope and prayer that God would be pleased to use this curriculum for his glory. Thus, the intention of this curriculum is to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ by equipping men, women, and young adults to serve as family, business and community leaders, full-time Christian workers, missionaries, pastors, and teachers. This curriculum is guided by the mission and vision of Bethlehem College & Seminary, which are more fully explained at [bcsmn.edu](http://bcsmn.edu). At the Bethlehem website, you will find the God-centered philosophy that undergirds and motivates everything we do. May God be glorified in us as we are satisfied in him alone!

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course *Mining God's Word* is an introduction to the methodology of inductive study of the Bible. Inductive study consists of careful observation of the text leading to sound interpretation and appropriate application. Students will learn study strategies, principles of interpretation, and principles of application throughout the course and apply them to the book of Philippians. Although the book of Philippians will serve as the primary “training grounds,” the course aims at imparting study skills that are applicable to the entire Bible. The course also aims at fostering sensitivity to literary genre and at cultivating inductive Bible study as a lifelong habit.

## 🌀 OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able

- ▷ To magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.
- ▷ To articulate the three principles of sound interpretation presented in this course relating to historical interpretation, contextual interpretation, and literary interpretation. By learning these three principles and practicing their application, the student should be able to more accurately interpret the Scriptures.
- ▷ To employ ten strategies of inductive study in further biblical study. These strategies include creating sentence flows, recording observations, discerning the main point, listing questions, checking cross-references, paraphrasing the logic, doing word studies, comparing translations, doing thematic studies, and using secondary resources.
- ▷ To understand how to make personal application of the Bible by following ten principles of appropriate application.
- ▷ To make immediate plans for continuing personal, inductive Bible study. This last objective will be accomplished by the completion of the course's final project.

## 🌀 IMPLEMENTATION

As the instructor of this course, it is imperative that you are completely familiar with the curriculum. We therefore recommend that you read this entire section carefully and then skim through the rest of what is contained in this binder.

This course is designed to be taught in 12 lessons, ideally in 2 hours of in-class instruction and with approximately 2.5 hours of homework each week. To achieve the kind of undistracted focus and academic rigor that maximizes learning, we recommend that this course be taught as a weeknight class. We anticipate, however, that this curriculum might be adapted for a Sunday school, small group, or discipleship setting. If this is necessary or most



appropriate, we urge you to establish an expectation among your students that this course will require more concentration and commitment than a typical Sunday school class would. A tone of serious and earnest study should be set by the instructor before the course even begins.

Before the first class session, you will need to decide when and where this course will be offered. Record this information on the syllabus in the box labeled: “Course Information.” You may also want to include your contact information in this box. The schedule incorporated in the syllabus does not have assigned dates. Please write the intended dates for each lesson. Once you have completed filling out the syllabus, photocopy it so that you may distribute one copy to each student enrolled in the course. The *Student Workbook* does not include a syllabus, so your students will not have a syllabus until you distribute one. Photocopying the syllabus is the only photocopying that is required of you by this curriculum (though it may also be necessary to photo-copy a section of a commentary in preparation for Lesson 10).

The lesson outline for Lesson 1, included in the *Teaching Notes*, is our suggestion for how the class time should be structured. Although it is not necessary to follow this outline rigidly, nevertheless you should allow adequate time for each component of the lesson. Review the first lesson and its outline thoroughly before you attempt to teach it.

Lesson outlines are provided for subsequent lessons also. To prepare for each lesson, we recommend that you review the lesson material thoroughly.

Each lesson’s homework is divided into five days of assignments for the convenience of the student. Students should be encouraged to complete this daily work throughout the week rather than attempting to rush through the material the day before class. Each homework assignment will focus on the book of Philippians. It is to be completed *before* the next class session. In preparation for class the student will also read selected chapters from *Living By the Book*, which reinforce what was taught in the previous lesson and provide some helpful information for the homework assignment. Please note that *the students are not required to complete Hendricks’ “You Try It” sections!* The book should be viewed as supplemental reading for the course; the course is not designed around the textbook.

During the first half of the class session, the class will discuss the homework they’ve completed. Then, in the second half, students will

### *First Lesson*

### *Subsequent Lessons*

complete in-class exercises that provide essential background information or give them an opportunity to practice a small-scale version of the upcoming homework assignment. This will give them the opportunity to ask questions and work through misunderstandings before attempting the larger-scale assignment. This should all become clearer after you work through the first few lessons. Again, *please at least skim through the entire course before you teach it!*

The lesson outlines for this course share several recurring components. Although each lesson may provide more detailed instructions for each component, the basic components of each lesson could include the following:

- ▷ **Prayer:** The practice of serious and rigorous inductive study does not replace the need for prayer. In this curriculum, prayer is not taught as a separate step in the inductive process. Rather, it is a humble activity that should permeate the *entire* process. There-fore, the importance of prayer is communicated in this curriculum by placing it at the beginning of every lesson. As the instructor, you should model your dependence on God's grace by asking him to bless each class session. Secondly, the prayer time at the beginning of each lesson is designed to foster an atmosphere of camaraderie and trust among the students.
  
- ▷ **Review Memory Verses:** It is our conviction that the most effective way to meditate on the Word and to apply it to daily life is to memorize as much as possible. Extended and concentrated study on shorter biblical passages should internalize the content naturally, but we include this component in order to ensure that memorization is happening. Encourage the students not to memorize their verses at the last minute, but to memorize their verses earlier in the week, so that they can profit from having the Word in their mind throughout the week. The purpose of reciting the verses in class is not to embarrass or shame those who may not have memorized, but to provide gentle encouragement and accountability. As the instructor, you should model the importance of this component by memorizing verses yourself.
  
- ▷ **Discussion (of homework):** This is a key component of each lesson! The discussion time allows the students to share the joy of what they discovered

in their homework and provides the instructor with an opportunity to refine the students' skills in inductive study of the Bible. See the section entitled "Teaching Style" below for suggestions on how to use this time effectively.

- ▷ **Introductory Paragraphs:** At the beginning of most lessons there are paragraphs of material that relate to the principle of interpretation or study strategy that is covered in the lesson. We recommend that you read each of these paragraphs aloud or have a student volunteer read. Please feel free to add your own comments and suggestions.
  
- ▷ **Exercises:** All the exercises in this curriculum will reinforce what the students have learned in the homework assignment, prepare them for the next assignment, or convey information that is necessary for fruitful inductive study. Each of these exercises has explicit instructions.
  
- ▷ **Closing:** It is important for the students to have a clear understanding of what each homework assignment requires. A lack of clarity will only confuse or frustrate the students and will render the discussion in the next lesson less effective. Therefore, ensure that the students know what is expected of them. If the expectations are not clear in your mind, briefly review the answer page(s) provided in the lesson. Use this time to remind the students of any specific instructions related to your course, including date, time, and location changes for the next lesson. The closing prayer should not be a token prayer, but another genuine plea for God's grace.

As the instructor, you will be expected to do all the preparation for each lesson that is required of the students and more. We strongly recommend that you obtain a *Student's Workbook* and attempt to complete the homework on your own before consulting this *Instructor's Guide*. The *Instructor's Guide* provides our suggested answers. Some questions in this curriculum are open-ended and could be answered in different ways. If you find that the answers contained in this manual not the clearest or most accurate answers possible, we encourage you to improve upon our answers if you can. It is essential to understand that **this *Instructor's Guide* is meant to be a resource; the real authority is God's Word.**

You will also notice that the *Instructor's Guide* has material that is not included in the *Student Workbook* in the form of Teaching Notes and sidebar notations.

### *Teaching Style*

It is our conviction that the best teachers foster an environment in the classroom which engages students. Adults learn by solving problems or by working through things that provoke curiosity or concern. Therefore, we discourage you from lecturing for the entire lesson. Although an instructor will constantly shape conversation, clarifying and correcting as needed, they will probably not talk for the majority of the lesson. This curriculum is meant to facilitate an investigation into biblical truth—an investigation that is shared by the instructor and the students. Therefore, we encourage you to adopt the posture of a “fellow-learner” who invites participation from everyone in the class.

It might surprise you how eager adults can be to share what they have learned in preparing for each lesson. Therefore, you should invite participation by asking your students to share their discoveries. Here are some of our “tips” on facilitating discussion that is engaging and helpful:

- ▶ Don't be uncomfortable with silence initially. Once the first student shares their response, others will be likely to join in. If you cut the silence short by prompting the students, they are more likely to wait for you to prompt them every time.
- ▶ Affirm answers whenever possible and draw out the students by asking for clarification. Your aim is to make them feel comfortable sharing their ideas and learning, so be extremely hesitant to “shut down” a student's contribution or “trump” it with your own. This does not mean, however, that you shouldn't correct false ideas—just do it in a spirit of gentleness and love.
- ▶ Don't allow a single student or several students to dominate the discussion. Involve everyone and intentionally invite participation from those who are more reserved or hesitant.
- ▶ Labor to show the significance of their study. Emphasize the things that the students could not have learned without doing the homework.
- ▶ Avoid talking too much. The instructor should not monopolize the discussion, but rather guide and shape it. If the instructor does the majority of the talking, the students will be less likely to interact and engage, and will therefore not learn as much. Avoid constantly adding the “definitive last word.”
- ▶ The instructor should feel the freedom to linger on a topic or question if the group demonstrates interest. The instructor should also pursue digressions that are helpful and at least somewhat relevant. The instructor, however,

*should* attempt to cover the material. So avoid the extreme of constantly wandering off topic, but also avoid the extreme of limiting the conversation in a way that squelches curiosity or learning.

- ▷ The instructor's passion, or lack of it, is infectious. Therefore, if you demonstrate little enthusiasm for the material, it is almost inevitable that your students will likewise be bored. But if you have a genuine excitement for what you are studying, and if you truly think inductive Bible study is worthwhile, your class will be impacted positively. Therefore, it is our recommendation that before you come to class, you spend adequate time working through the homework and praying so that you can overflow with genuine enthusiasm for the Bible and for God in class. This point cannot be stressed enough. Delight yourself in God and in his Word!

It may be necessary to again stress that **this curriculum is a resource**. As the instructor, you should feel the freedom to structure the class time and to discuss through the material in a way that promotes the maximum learning and enjoyment of your students. Lingering on certain questions, pursuing *helpful* digressions, examining relevant portions of Scripture, adding other supplemental material, and customizing the curriculum to fit your situation are all heartily approved.

If you still have questions after reading this introduction and surveying the curriculum, you may contact Bethlehem College & Seminary at [info@bcsmn.edu](mailto:info@bcsmn.edu). We are also eager for your comments and suggestions! Thanks!

*Questions or Comments?*





## Mining God's Word

### *How to Study the Bible*

#### SYLLABUS

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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course *Mining God's Word* is an introduction to the methodology of inductive study of the Bible. Inductive study consists of careful observation of the text leading to sound interpretation and appropriate application. Students will learn study strategies and principles of interpretation and application throughout the course and apply them to the book of Philippians. Although the book of Philippians will serve as the primary “training grounds,” the course aims at imparting study skills that are applicable to the entire Bible. The course also aims at fostering sensitivity to literary genre and at cultivating inductive Bible study as a lifelong habit.

#### OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to accomplish specific objectives. A student successfully completing this course should be able

- ▷ To magnify the worth of God in a more meaningful and personal way by treasuring him in their heart above all else. We recognize that this, the ultimate objective of the course, is impossible apart from the grace of God in the working of the Holy Spirit, who exalts the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.
- ▷ To articulate the three principles of sound interpretation presented in this course relating to historical interpretation, contextual interpretation, and literary interpretation. By learning these three principles and practicing their application, the student should be able to more accurately interpret the Scriptures.
- ▷ To employ ten strategies of inductive study in further biblical study. These strategies include creating sentence flows, recording observations, discerning the main point, listing questions, checking cross-references, paraphrasing the logic, doing word studies, comparing translations, doing thematic studies, and using secondary resources.

- ▷ To understand how to make personal application of the Bible by following ten principles of appropriate application.
- ▷ To make immediate plans for continuing personal, inductive Bible study. This last objective will be accomplished by the completion of the course's final project.

### 📖 REQUIRED BOOKS (TEXTBOOKS)

- ▷ An English version of the Bible, preferably the *English Standard Version* (ESV). We particularly recommend:
  - ▷ Crossway Bibles. *ESV: Study Bible : English Standard Version*. Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Bibles, 2007.
  - ▷ Zondervan. *NIV Zondervan Study Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- ▷ Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 2007).

Note: The textbook *Living by the Book* should be viewed as supplemental reading for the course. This course is not designed around the content or methodology of this book. Nevertheless, the book will reinforce the curriculum at key points and offers a helpful and complementary perspective on inductive Bible study.

This course will provide copies of biblical texts and require students to mark up these texts extensively. Therefore, it is also strongly recommended that each student obtain a set of colored pens or pencils as course materials. Various colors of highlighters could also be used.

### 📖 REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to progress through Lessons 2-12 by completing the lesson pages in a sequential order. Therefore, for each lesson's homework a student should review the Introduction, Lesson Objectives, and what was covered during the class session under the heading, "Study Guide." Then the student should proceed to complete the assignments listed under the heading, "Homework," including the required readings. Each lesson's workload has been divided into five daily assignments for the convenience of the student. Students will complete a brief project at the end of the course.

Students will pass this course if they attend at least 10 class sessions, complete all the assignments, and complete an adequate final project. Please contact the instructor with any problems or concerns.

### 📖 FINAL PROJECT

The course's final project is introduced in Lesson 12 with detailed instructions. It is not necessary for the student to review the expectations for the final project until that time.



 SCHEDULE

<b>Lesson</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lesson Title</b>
1		God's Word Is a Treasure Mine
2		There Is a Meaning in This Text
3		Stare at the Fish
4		Query the Text
5		Scripture Interpreting Scripture
6		Grasping the Flow
7		"Every Word of God Proves True"
8		The Blessing of Different Translations
9		Prophecies, Parables, Proverbs—Oh My!
10		"Of Making Many Books There Is No End"
11		Applying the Word
12		Study the Word!





It is likely that you have read the book of Philippians before, perhaps *many* times. But how much have you retained of what you read? The following exercise attempts to discern just that.

Write a brief summary of the book of Philippians below without the use of a Bible or notes of any kind, including in your summary all the relevant information that you can remember. Include information about the author, the recipients, the occasion and purpose for the letter, major themes, structure, memorable verses, etc.

Collect these summaries from students after they have worked on them for about 10 minutes.



# God's Word Is a Treasure Mine

# 1

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

As the inspired Word of God, the Bible is in a category all by itself. It commands a reverence that no other book ever will. The Bible is, however, also a piece of human literature, and as such, should be examined and discussed with precision, rigor, and patience. The belief that the Bible is inerrant and infallible should not discourage such efforts, but rather intensify them and provide direction and purpose. Therefore, in this course we will apply all of our heart, and *all of our mind*, to learn the skills and techniques for accurate and fruitful study of the Word. Although the Bible offers many treasures on a surface reading, for those who are willing to dig down deeper, untold treasures await to dazzle the soul. As John Piper has said, “Raking is easy, but you get only leaves; digging is hard, but you might find diamonds.”<sup>1</sup> May the Lord increase your understanding and your love for this treasure beyond words!

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- appreciate the importance of active reading and rigorous study of the Bible
- ascertain their own initial comprehension of Philippians
- understand the value of patient and careful observation

**Prayer (5 min):** Welcome the class. Pray that God would glorify himself in this course by revealing himself through the study of his Word.

**Personal Introductions (15 min):** It is important that you cultivate camaraderie in your class. To this end, *briefly* introduce yourself and then ask your students to *briefly* introduce themselves. Ask the following three questions (or think of your own):

- What is your name?
- Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?
- Why are you in this course and what do you hope to get out of it?

**Discussion (15 min):** Ask each student in the class to describe how they study the Bible. By studying the Bible we mean something that goes beyond reading the Bible devotionally. The following list of questions might give you an idea of the kind of information this discussion should solicit from the students:

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<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 1995), 387.



## TEACHING NOTES

- Are the pages of your Bible marked up or clean?
- If you mark up your Bible, do you use highlighters, pens, or pencils?
- Do you ever journal about what you're reading in the Bible?
- Do you ever consult a commentary?
- Do you ever look up cross-references?
- Do you study using different translations?
- Do you make outlines or charts?
- Where do you study the Bible? When? For how long? How often?

These questions represent the kind of questions that you might ask. You are not expected to follow this list rigidly.

The first half of this lesson is designed to provoke thought on the importance of Bible study and force students to think about their own Bible study habits. As the instructor you will want to make your classroom, from the very start, a comfortable and safe place to discuss ideas. Ensure that the layout of the course is understandable to your students.

As asserted in the lesson, there is a difference between “reading” and “studying.” Here are John Piper’s reflections on the distinction, which you might want to share with your students. The citation is an excerpt from a sermon entitled, “The Ministry of the Word” (available at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)):

*We make a great mistake when we think that study consists mainly in reading (as commonly understood)—even reading the Bible. Many think they have studied well when they have spent the morning reading through some worthy book of divinity. And thus the measure of our study becomes the number of books that we have read.*

*But my own conviction is that fruitful study is primarily thinking not reading. My guess is that reading, which was meant to become a stimulus and guide to independent thinking, usually becomes a substitute for it. The evidence for this is how many books we read and how little we write down. Fresh thinking must always be put down on paper to get it clear and preserve it for use.*

The rationale for the pre-test is threefold. First, it may reveal to many students that they do not know the Bible as well as they thought. This will hopefully create a sense of need to learn what is presented in the course. Second, this will give you, the instructor, a sense of each student’s base knowledge and level of articulation. Third, students will compare their pre-tests with the summaries they write at the end of the course and will thereby have a gauge for measuring how much they’ve learned through the course.

There are many exercises within this curriculum that are somewhat open-ended. Since this course focuses on imparting Bible study skills, don’t let the discussion get bogged down in debating particular answers for the exercise in Philemon. Though you do want to push the students to make careful observations, your overriding priority should be ensuring that your students understand the steps of the inductive process. Proficiency in inductive study will

grow with practice and so the class time should focus on the particular skills and principles rather than an interpretation of Philemon (though, of course, there will be some overlap between the two). Encourage the students that they will continue to see more and more as they progress through the course and learn the material.

We have included the Lesson Outlines in the sidebar throughout the course to help you as you work through the lesson, and to help you manage time. An abbreviated outline will also be included in the Teaching Notes.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** Welcome the class. Pray that God would glorify himself in this course by revealing himself through the study of his Word.

**Personal Introductions (15 min):** Briefly introduce yourself and then ask your students to *briefly* introduce themselves.

**Discussion (15 min):** Ask each student in the class to describe *how* they study the Bible.

**Exercise (15 min):** Ask the class to brainstorm reasons why people don't study the Bible.

**Course Syllabus (10 min):** Distribute your customized syllabus.

*Optional Break (5 min)*

**PRE-TEST (10 min):** Instruct the students to write a summary of Philippians using the sheet provided in their workbook.

**Exercise 1: (20 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 1.

**Read Appendix A (10 min):** Read this story aloud to your students.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 1. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.

**Exercise (15 min):** Ask the class to brainstorm reasons why people don't study the Bible. Record their suggestions as a list on a blackboard or whiteboard, if possible. After about 5 minutes, have the class identify themselves in that list—why don't *they* study the Bible?

### **Course Syllabus (10 min):**

Distribute your customized syllabus (see the *Instructor's Introduction* for instructions pertaining to the syllabus). After each student has received a copy, guide the class through it, reading each item and answering any questions that the students might have.

*Optional Break (5 min)*

**PRE-TEST (10 min):** Instruct the students to write a summary of Philippians using the sheet provided in their workbook. After 10 minutes, collect these sheets. You will return these summaries at the end of the course (Lesson 12), but it is not necessary to tell the students this.

### **Introduction**

Read through the Introduction, and proceed through the Study Guide.



## STUDY GUIDE

The Study Guide sections contain material to be covered during class time.

This course operates on the assumption that a simple *reading* of the Bible is different from *studying* the Bible. Furthermore, we assume that studying the Bible is a much more effective way to retain the Bible's content and apply its truth. Therefore, we are in full agreement with the following assertion:

*"The goal a reader seeks—be it entertainment, information or understanding—determines the way he reads. The effectiveness with which he reads is determined by the amount of effort and skill he puts into his reading. In general, the rule is: the more effort the better, at least in the case of books that are initially beyond our powers as readers and are therefore capable of raising us from a condition of understanding less to one of understanding more."*<sup>2</sup>

And R. C. Sproul says this in his book about studying the Bible:

*"It is important to note that the theme of this book is not how to read the Bible but how to study the Bible. There is a great deal of difference between reading and studying. Reading is something we can do in a leisurely way, something that can be done strictly for entertainment in a causal, cavalier manner. But study suggests labor, serious and diligent work."*<sup>3</sup>

The approach to inductive Bible study that this course will adopt is a book-by-book approach. Many courses or textbooks that introduce Bible study methods equip a student to study an individual passage of a book, though these approaches generally emphasize the importance of examining a passage's context.

This course, however, will introduce a methodology for studying entire biblical books. It is our conviction that this is the best way to study the Bible. Not only does this approach ensure that each passage is understood within the book's overall structure and purpose, but it also includes certain steps in the inductive study process that are normally absent from methodologies that focus on individual passages alone.

The book of Philippians will serve as a training ground throughout this course. We will concentrate on imparting principles for sound interpretation and study strategies. The course is not designed to be an exhaustive study on the

Philippians was chosen because it is shorter, has fewer interpretive issues relating to genre than other books, and introduces many of the basics of the Christian life.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed. (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 16.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1977), 17.



theology of Philippians; Neither is it a Bible study on Philippians per se. At the end of the course, you will hopefully be able to apply what you've learned to any book of the Bible. Yet a study on the book of Isaiah, for example, while using the same methodology that this course introduces, would obviously require much more time than a study on Philippians.

## 🔗 EXERCISE 1: WHO IS WRITING TO WHOM?

The first step in our inductive study process is to read the selected biblical book a few times through, preferably reading the entire book in a single sitting. In the first reading you should notice as much as you can about the author of the book and the book's recipients. Some biblical books do not provide as much explicit information about the author and recipients as other books do.

During the class sessions of this course, we will sometimes use the book of Philemon as a stepping stone for our study of Philippians. The goal is to apply what we do in class with Philemon to the book of Philippians for the homework. Here is the text of Philemon in full:

Philemon

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. <sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he

**Exercise 1: Who Is Writing to Whom? (20 min):** Read through the instructions aloud. Allow the students several minutes to attempt to answer each question before you facilitate discussion on these questions

is indeed useful to you and to me.)<sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.<sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,<sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.<sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,<sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.<sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.<sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.<sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.<sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.<sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.<sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,<sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.<sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Throughout this curriculum we will only provide titles for online articles and sermons from Desiring God Ministries in order to prevent confusion over changing web addresses. A simple search on [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) should be a reliable way to find any Desiring God resources listed.

**Note:** This course will employ the *English Standard Version* (ESV) of the Bible. This is the English translation of choice for Bethlehem College & Seminary and Bethlehem Baptist Church. For a rationale of why we prefer this particular translation, see the article “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

1. Using the text provided above, underline your observations about the author and recipient of this biblical book. Summarize your observations below.

### Observations on Author

**ANSWER:** *Paul is the author (v. 9) and is a prisoner for Christ Jesus (vv. 1, 9) as an old man (v. 9). Paul is not alone in prison (vv. 23-24) and is hoping to be released to travel (v. 22). He has recently become the “father” of Onesimus (v. 10), who was the former slave of another of Paul’s converts: Philemon (v. 19). Paul has the authority to command (v. 8), but prefers to appeal, for the sake of love (v. 9).*

We strongly encourage instructors to do their own study of the text before looking at the answers.

### Observations on Recipient

**ANSWER:** *The letter is addressed to several individuals and a house church (vv. 1-2), but is written specifically to Philemon (vv. 1, 7), who seems to own the house that the church met in. He was a former convert of Paul (v. 19) and was the loving, generous (v. 7) owner of a useless runaway slave (vv. 11, 15) who was converted by Paul (v. 10). He seems to be wealthy because Paul asks him to prepare a guest room for him (v. 22).*

After learning about the author and recipient(s) of any biblical book, we must then focus on the relationship between the two. Are the author and recipients friends? Do they have a strained relationship? Is the biblical book intended for a wider, believing audience?

After considering the relationship between author and recipients, we consider the occasion of the book. Again, some biblical books will provide more information about the occasion than others. Discerning the occasion of the book is especially important for the epistles of the New Testament.

This course will distinguish the *occasion* of a biblical book from its *purpose* in the following way:

**OCCASION:** *The situation or events that prompt the author to compose the book.*

**PURPOSE:** *The effect or result that the author intends the book to accomplish.*

As you can see, the occasion and purpose of a book are related and often share an amount of overlap. The distinction, however, is a helpful one to maintain.

2. Still using the text of Philemon provided above, underline every verse or phrase that indicates the relationship between the author and recipient. (You may want to use a different style or color of underlining to distinguish these observations from the textual observations you made about the author and recipient.) Then think about what situation prompted the author to write this letter. Again underline verses that suggest answers. Record your observations below.

#### **Observations on Relationship**

**ANSWER:** *The relationship between Paul and Philemon is obviously close since Paul calls him a “fellow worker” (v. 1) and makes his appeal based on their partnership (v. 17). Paul is bold enough to say to Philemon, “refresh my heart in Christ” (v. 20), but Paul does want Philemon to cooperate out of his own free will (v. 14). Paul is thankful for Philemon (v. 4) and is confident that he will do more than Paul says (v. 21).*

### Observations on Occasion

*ANSWER: Paul is writing this letter on behalf of Onesimus, who was recently converted by Paul (v. 10). It appears that Onesimus ran away from Philemon (v. 15), and maybe even stole something from Philemon (v. 19). Therefore, it is possible that Onesimus would not be well received if he returned. Paul is sending Onesimus back because he is still the rightful slave of Philemon, and Paul doesn't want to force Philemon's hand (v. 14). Paul also takes this occasion to ask Philemon to prepare a guest room for him (22).*

The previous observations you've made about the author, recipients, their relationship, and the occasion, contribute to your understanding of the purpose of the book. The overall purpose of a book is an important thing to grasp as you interpret the book verse by verse. Certainly your understanding will be refined (and perhaps corrected) as you study the book, but it is important to attempt to discern the book's purpose at the onset of study.

3. What might the author have desired to accomplish by writing and sending this letter? In other words, what is the letter's purpose? Once more, underline words or phrases that provide relevant information. Then record your ideas below.

**Read Appendix A (10 min):** Read this story aloud to your students.

Either before or after you read the story, give the gist of the following paragraph:

The following is a classic account of the importance of first-hand observation, and careful, intense, focused study. It teaches lessons that apply to almost any discipline. Indeed, it is widely used in colleges and universities across the U.S. as a teaching tool in both the humanities and the sciences. Its lessons certainly apply to studying the Bible. Too often students of the Bible rely on second-hand, derivative knowledge, acquired from pastors, parents, books about the Bible, or other secondary sources. While all of these have their place, there is no substitute, in the end, for one's own first-hand study and experience of the Scriptures, and for the joy of discovery.

(Excerpt taken from the website of Prof. David M. Howard, Jr., Bethel Seminary, [www.bethel.edu/seminary\\_academics/gensem/dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm](http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/gensem/dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm), accessed May 26, 2016.)

### Interpretation of Purpose

*ANSWER: Paul is writing this letter on behalf of Onesimus (v. 10). He urges Philemon to receive Onesimus as Philemon would receive Paul (v. 17): as a brother (v. 16). In short, the purpose of this letter is to ensure Onesimus's kind reception by his former master. Why would Paul want Onesimus to be well-received? Because Onesimus is his spiritual child (v. 10), his "very heart" (v. 12), and it is fitting given the fact that Onesimus and Philemon are now brothers in the Lord (v. 16). Paul wants Philemon to demonstrate his goodness out of his own free will (v. 14).*

The exercise you have just completed in Philemon and the identical exercise you will do in Philippians depend on careful observation. The prolonged concentration that careful observation requires may come with difficulty.

Therefore, please turn to Appendix A to read a story that should stir up your curiosity and motivate you to exert the patience you'll need to get the most out of inductive study of the Bible.



The following table outlines the student’s homework. Please complete this work before the next class session. At the beginning of the next lesson, the class will review this assignment through discussion. So please come prepared to contribute to the discussion.

We suggest that you read all five days of the assignment before you begin.

**Day 1** Using the text of Philippians included in the following pages of this lesson, read through the book once observing all the details you can about the *author* and the *recipients*. You should read through the text slowly, not letting any detail escape your notice. Underline verses or phrases that provide you with information, using different colored pens or pencils for each set of observations.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 1

**Day 2** Having read through the book of Philippians the previous day, review the details you observed about the author and recipients. Then record a summary of your findings (with supporting Scripture references) on the assignment sheet provided in this lesson.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 2

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 9

**Day 3** Reread the text of Philippians observing all the details you can about the *relationship* between the author and recipients and the *occasion* (as defined in this lesson) of the book. Underline verses or phrases that provide you with information, using a different colored pens or pencils for each set of observations.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 3

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 16

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 1. Tell the students that the “Further Reading” assignments are recommended, but optional. Remind the students to bring their Bible to each class. Field any questions, pray, and dismiss.

**Day 4** Review the details you observed about the author-recipient relationship and occasion. Then record a summary of your findings (with supporting Scripture references) on the assignment sheet provided in this lesson.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 4

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 17

**Day 5** Reread the entire text of Philippians for a third time, with an eye to the *purpose* of the book. What might the author have desired to accomplish by writing and sending this letter? For what purpose did he write? Underline relevant data and summarize your conjectures about the book's purpose on the assignment sheet. Come to the next class session prepared to discuss all your findings.



 APPLICATION QUESTIONS



Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. How has Paul's model challenged your faith? In what ways do you want to be more like him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is your response to conflict? Is this a biblical, Christ-like response?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Your own reflections:

At the end of Lessons 1-11, we will include a section for application questions. Since application is most appropriate at the end of the inductive Bible study process, we will not examine it in detail until Lessons 11 and 12. Careful observation and sound interpretation ought to precede application to ensure that it is done fittingly. In another sense, however, reading the Bible as God's Word to us suggests that application should permeate the entire process. At the least, we should observe and interpret the Bible with a heart that is ready to hear the Word of God and respond appropriately. Therefore, though we are admittedly jumping to the end of the process, we have included application questions for each lesson. Let your reflection on these questions (and whatever limited class time that may be invested in discussing these questions) "simmer" so that your application of the truth at the end of the course is a result of thoughts you've been incubating throughout the course.

## 🔗 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In Lesson 10 we will introduce helpful resources for building your own theological library. The resource list in that lesson offers some of our recommendations of helpful resources for inductive Bible study as well as aids to the inductive process. In the *Additional Resources* section of each lesson, however, we have mainly chosen resources from Desiring God Ministries ([desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)) that pertain to what we've studied in each lesson.

Throughout the course you will see Additional Resources listed.

They are not a required part of the course, but will be very helpful to your students, and to you, the instructor, as you prepare to lead discussion each week.

- ▷ Mortimer, J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972).
- ▷ John Piper, “A Compelling Reason for Rigorous Training of the Mind,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

## PHILIPPIANS (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. <sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. <sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not



frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. <sup>21</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. <sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or questioning, <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. <sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. <sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup> For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, <sup>24</sup> and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. <sup>25</sup> I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, <sup>26</sup> for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that



you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup> So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, <sup>30</sup> for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. <sup>31</sup> Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. <sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—  
<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained. <sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. <sup>41</sup> Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. <sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.





<sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. <sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. <sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. <sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.





### Summary of Observations on Author

- **ANSWER:** *Although the letter is addressed from Paul and Timothy (1:1), it is clear that Paul is the sole author (2:19). He is in Rome (1:13, 4:22) and in prison (1:13) for the gospel (1:16), although his imprisonment doesn't preclude fellowship with other believers (2:20ff., 4:21) or receiving gifts (4:18) or bearing witness to Christ (1:13). It appears that Paul has an upcoming hearing (2:23), and expects to be released (1:19) so that he might visit the Philippians again (1:26, 2:24).*

*But nevertheless, Paul is suffering (1:29-30), even from those who preach Christ (1:17) and it is probable that he is in physical need (4:10ff.). He has been encouraged by the gift that was sent to him (4:10), although he is quick to defend himself from charges of greediness or dependence (4:17). He still is rejoicing that the gospel is being preached (1:18) and can say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (1:21). Paul is confident of the Philippians' faith (1:6), but still encourages them to faithfulness so that he can be proud of his work among them on the day of Christ (2:16). He holds himself up as a model (3:17, 4:9; cf. 3:7ff.) but also directs them to the example of Christ (2:6-11). Paul does not think of himself as perfect (3:12), but he does press forward (3:13-14) and gives up all racial privileges and religious boasting (3:4-8). Paul wants to know Christ (3:10) and is awaiting his return and the resurrection of the dead (3:20-21).*

## Summary of Observations on Recipients

- **ANSWER:** *The Philippian church seems to be rather well-established since it has elders and deacons (1:1) and a number of good role models (3:17). Paul seems confident of the good work that God had begun in them (1:6) and he considers the Philippians to be partners in the gospel (1:5). In fact, Paul singles them out by saying that in the beginning of the gospel, “no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only” (4:15). Recently, the church had another opportunity to show its concern by sending Epaphroditus (a messenger from the Philippian church) with what seems to be a financial gift (2:25; 4:10-18). The gift was acceptable to Paul and to God (4:18).*

*But the church was not without problems. It was experiencing persecution (1:29-30) and may have been frightened by opponents (1:28) and anxious about Paul’s situation (1:12, 2:17-18). Moreover, it appears as if conflict and rivalry was tearing the church (1:27; 2:2-4), and Paul addresses one conflict in particular (between Euodia and Syntyche, 4:2) presumably because it was especially divisive. It is possible that there was also grumbling and questioning in the church (2:14), and even despair, since Paul repeatedly exhorts them to rejoice (3:1, 4:4). It is also possible that there was the threat of Judaizers, who would assert circumcision (3:2). But all in all it seems as if the church was not as battered by controversy and false teaching as other churches with which Paul corresponded (3:1; cf. 3:15).*

*Who is Paul’s true companion (4:3)?*



### Summary of Observations on the Relationship Between Author and Recipients

- *Answer:* The letter gives every indication of an intimate and long-standing relationship between Paul and the Philippian church. They were partners in the gospel (1:5, 4:3), partners in giving and receiving (4:15), and partners in suffering (1:7, 30). Paul prays for the Philippians (1:3-4), and expects them to be praying for him (1:19). Paul knew at least some of the Philippian believers personally (4:2-3), and they knew him and Timothy (2:22). News flowed freely between them (1:12, 27, 30; 2:19).

Paul feels very affectionate for these believers: “For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus” (1:8; cf. 1:7, 2:28). He works for their joy in the faith (1:25) and is cheered by news of them (2:19). The Philippians have always obeyed Paul (2:12) and shown concern for him (4:10). He can argue from their mutual participation in the Spirit (2:1). But Paul still thinks it necessary to come to them again for their progress in the faith (1:25) and he writes as a safeguard to their faith (3:1).

### Summary of Observations on the Occasion for Philippians

- *Answer:* As in most of Paul’s letters, it is hard to pin down a single, specific reason on account of which Paul wrote this letter. The immediate occasion for the letter was Paul’s desire to thank the Philippians for their gift and to inform them of his plans to send Epaphroditus (2:25) and Timothy (2:19), and perhaps to come himself (2:23). Paul wants to inform the church at Philippi that he has received “full payment, and more” (4:18) and that he is now “well-supplied” (4:18). He wants to thank them for their gift: “it was kind of you to share my trouble” (4:14). At the same time Paul deflects the potential accusation that he is greedy (4:17). But nevertheless, the Philippians’ gift was helpful to Paul and pleasing to God (4:18). Paul also moves beyond their gift, and rejoices over the partnership and affectionate relationship that exists between him and them (1:3-8, 4:15).

Paul also writes to inform the church of his desire to send Timothy soon (2:19). The express purpose of Timothy’s visit is to bring news of the church back to Paul to cheer him (2:19). But Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to them now, presumably with the letter (2:25). Paul confirms that Epaphroditus has completed his task of delivering the gifts (4:18) and that he was indeed ill (2:27). Perhaps this is meant to allay any fears that the Philippians had about

*Epaphroditus running off with the gift himself. If they were in fact fearful of such a scenario, Paul assures them of Epaphroditus's character, and urges them to receive him and honor him (2:29).*

*These, then, are the two immediate causes for Paul's letter. But, if Paul had only desired to communicate these two things, it is unclear why he wouldn't have written a much shorter and more concise letter. Because Paul addresses many other things in this letter, it is reasonable to assume that he took the occasion of writing this letter to accomplish a few additional things.*

### **Summary of Conjectures on the Purpose of Philippians**

*Answer: First, the letter is filled with exhortation to the Philippian church. The exhortation centers on two themes: unity and joy. It is apparent that there is division and conflict in the Philippian church. Paul writes to urge unity. He calls the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit (1:27), and be of one mind (2:2)—that of Christ Jesus (2:5). He says, “do all things without grumbling or questioning” (2:14), and later he specifically entreats Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord (4:2). But it is also probable that the church was prone to despair, because Paul repeatedly commands the Philippians to rejoice (2:18, 3:1, 4:4). As Paul exhorts the Philippians, it is clear that he himself is modeling the behavior that he calls them to also. His model of faith is prominent throughout the letter (1:18-26, 2:17-18, 3:7-17, 4:9). But Timothy, Epaphroditus, and others are also given as models of humble faith (2:20, 29-30; 3:17), with the ultimate example being Christ (2:5-8).*

*Second, the letter is a warning against false teachers, who are considered enemies of the cross (3:2, 18). These enemies seem to stress circumcision, but Paul emphatically asserts that racial and religious boasts of any kind are worthless in comparison to knowing Christ (3:2-11). There also seems to be a contingent in the church that is immature and may think either that they have arrived at perfection or that sanctification is unnecessary (3:12-15). But on the whole, the tone of the letter and the brevity of Paul's remarks on this topic suggest that the Philippians haven't fallen into this false teaching. There is no explicit rebuke.*

*Third, the letter is an encouragement. Paul feels emotionally attached to the Philippians (1:7-8) and values their partnership (1:5, 7; 4:15). The Philippians have been consistently obedient (2:12) and Paul is confident of God's ability to bring them to completion (1:5). If the Philippians have ungodly anxiety about Paul's imprisonment, they shouldn't; his imprisonment has served to advance the gospel (1:12). The Philippians can stand firm against their opponents—and in the midst of persecution—for they have a glorious destination (1:28, 3:21).*

# There Is a Meaning in This Text

# 2

## § INTRODUCTION

Because *your Bible* has been conveniently translated, formatted, with each individual piece of biblical literature compiled and placed together, it becomes easy for modern readers to forget that they are, in essence, reading someone else's mail—or rather, letters, gospels, prophecies, and histories that were written to a specific audience thousands of years ago and in a different language. We forget some-times that real people and churches existed behind the New Testament epistles; we forget that the letters that were exchanged had no verse numbers, paragraph breaks, section headings, or study notes; we forget that life thousands of years ago was in some ways very different. So perhaps the first principle of accurate interpretation is to ensure that our interpretations are historically grounded. The more that we can learn about the historical and cultural setting of the Bible, the more likely we are to avoid reading our own contemporary situation into the text.

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of historical interpretation
- gain a basic familiarity with the timeline or geography of the New Testament
- practice identifying the structure of a biblical book

Throughout these lessons, we will include portions of the Lesson Outlines that are found in the Teaching Notes in the wide margin so that you can see the portion you need alongside of the lesson content.

**Prayer (5 min):** Remember to emphasize the importance of prayer in study of God's word. (See again the relevant section in the *Instructor's Introduction*.) To focus your prayer time for this lesson, you may choose to share quotation from John Piper's sermon entitled, "The Ministry of the Word," which is available at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) (See Teaching Notes). You may want to weave Proverbs 2:3-5 into your opening prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. The *Instructor's Introduction* includes suggestions for how to guide discussions. The discussion should frequently turn back to the book of Philippians, so constantly be challenging your students to back up their assertions with biblical verses. It must be apparent that their ideas are rooted in the text.

*Break (optional)*



**Historical Interpretation**  
(10 min): Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 2. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” Emphasize the principle of historical interpretation and the importance of authorial intent.

Lesson 2 focuses on teaching Historical Interpretation. The concept of textual meaning determined by authorial intent is an essential one for this course, though it is largely assumed and not thoroughly defended. If this is a concept that is difficult for your students to understand (or one they find objectionable!) you will want to invest more time discussing it.

John Piper says that one of the most influential books he ever read was *Validity in Interpretation* by E.D. Hirsch. Here is a description of Piper’s experience with this book (cited from “Books That Have Influenced Me Most,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)):

*From this book I came to believe very strongly in the real possibility of rethinking another person’s thoughts after him. This meant that “meaning,” defined as what an author willed to communicate, was a discoverable reality outside my own consciousness. This confidence provided for me a thrilling incentive to read what great thinkers have written, because it meant that I might be able to actually understand and appropriate what they thought. The possibilities for growth still seem unlimited on the basis of what I learned from Hirsch.*

Some approaches to inductive study direct students to information about the historical background before having the students study the biblical book or passage. In our opinion, this kind of background reading is more profitable if done after the students’ own initial study of the book. Throughout the course, our emphasis will be on first-hand discovery. We want to inspire students with what they can see in the text for themselves. Secondary resources should be consulted, but only after the student has done careful observation on their own. Therefore, all the “background reading” students will do in this course on Philip- pians will be to look up Acts 16:6–17:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2, and Acts 28:16-31. More thorough investigations into the city of Philippi and conditions in the first- century Roman Empire would be appropriate for a book study on Philip- pians, which this course is not.

The two sermons listed in the Additional Resources section exemplify the value of noticing structure in the study of Scripture.



## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** To focus your prayer time for this lesson, you may choose to share the following thoughts from John Piper, which, although directed toward pastors, certainly have broader application. These thoughts are from a sermon entitled, “The Ministry of the Word,” which is available at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org):

*“The minister of the Word must not choose between study and prayer. Study without prayer is the work of pride. Prayer without study is presumption. This is what the Proverbs teach: “If you cry out for insight and raise your voice for understanding (that’s prayer), and if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures (that’s study), then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5).*

*Prayer humbles the heart and gives it the tone of Christ and makes it ready and open and sensitive to the truth of Scripture. But it is study that brings in the truth and fills the heart with joy and power.”*

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Optional Break (5 min)*

**Historical Interpretation (10 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 2. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Exercise 1: Putting Philipians on the Timeline and on the Map (20 min):** Direct your students to either or both of the exercises in Appendix C.

**Exercise 2: An Outline of Philemon (20 min):** This exercise, using the book of Philemon, will introduce the students to the skill of ascertaining a book’s structure. It will prepare them for the next homework assignment.

**Closing (5 min)**



If someone wanted to become an expert on Shakespeare, they would probably study the history of sixteenth-century England. Although anyone can understand a certain amount of a Shakespearean play simply by reading it, there is no doubt that a grasp of the history, culture, and religion of the period would enrich one's understanding *and enjoyment* of the play. The same is true as we approach the Bible and want to become experts in its interpretation and application. By learning about the first-century world, the drama of the life and ministry of Jesus and his apostles gains depth and color that are otherwise lacking.

This leads us to the first of three principles for the sound interpretation of Scripture. Rather than being an isolated step within the inductive process, you should always keep this principle “in the back of your mind” as you read Scripture.

### Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.

As this principle suggests, one of the key concepts of this course is *authorial intent*. What we mean by this is that a text's meaning is determined by what the author of that text intended to communicate. Although seemingly basic, it is imperative that we start our study of the Bible by affirming this point, especially since there are many contemporary challenges to this concept.

Notice John Piper's testimony to this shift in our culture:

*“What has changed dramatically in the last fifty years is the concept of meaning and truth in our culture. Once it was the responsibility of historical scholars and judges and preachers to find the fixed meaning of a text (an essay, the Constitution, the Bible) and justify it with grammatical and historical arguments, and then explain it. Meaning in texts was not created by scholars and judges and preachers. It was found, because the authors put it there. Authors had intentions. And it was a matter of integrity to find what a writer intended—that was the meaning of the essay, the Constitution, the Bible. Everybody knew that if a person wrote ‘no’ and someone*

*else creatively interpreted it to mean ‘yes,’ something fraudulent had happened. But we have fallen a long way from that integrity. In historical scholarship and in constitutional law and in biblical interpretation, it is common today to say that meaning is whatever you see, not what the author said or intended.”<sup>4</sup>*

Bethlehem College & Seminary cherishes an affirmation of faith that specifically addresses this issue. Here are the relevant paragraphs:

1.2 We believe that God’s intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture.

1.3 We believe God’s intentions are revealed through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the authors’ intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware, as, for example, in the case of some Old Testament prophecies. Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations. Nevertheless it is not legitimate to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired.

1.4 Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible (which is its fullest meaning) is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure Biblical texts. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible, and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God’s Word.<sup>5</sup>

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4 John Piper, “Discerning the Will of God Concerning Homosexuality and Marriage,” an online sermon [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org). Please note that this curriculum will not provide the full web addresses for resources found on the Desiring God website. Resources can be located by searching [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) for the titles listed.

5 This excerpt and the supporting Scriptural references are available at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) under the title, “What We Believe About Scripture.” Bethlehem’s Affirmation of Faith can be viewed at [bcsmn.edu](http://bcsmn.edu)

Therefore, as we observe what is in the text and strive to interpret its meaning, we are always aiming to discover what the original author(s) meant. Only after we understand the original meaning will we try to apply that meaning or discern the contemporary significance of the text.

As the principle of historical interpretation stated above suggests, a grasp of the historical background of the text is sometimes a crucial factor in understanding the author's meaning.

For instance, we may comprehend Paul's basic message in the book of Philemon. But how much do *you* know about slavery in the Roman Empire? How might knowledge about first-century slavery enhance your understanding of Philemon? Certainly, it is not necessary for everyone in the church to become an expert on ancient history. But it would be incredibly helpful if everyone who set their heart on studying the Bible resolved to learn more about ancient history, as they were able. Gaining familiarity with the dates and places of the New Testament is only the first step into a rich and fruitful area of study.

**Exercise 1: Putting Philippians on the Timeline and on the Map (20 min):** Direct your students to either or both of the exercises in Appendix C. The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize the students with some of the most important dates and places in the era of the New Testament. An understanding of the basic history and geography of this period will only facilitate historical interpretation. Guide them through the answers, communicating a broad sense of the timeline or geography of this period as you are able.

**Exercise 2: An Outline of Philemon (20 min):** This exercise, using the book of Philemon, will introduce the students to the skill of ascertaining a book's structure. It will prepare them for the next homework assignment. Read the instructions and allow the students to attempt this exercise for about 10 minutes. Then facilitate discussion on the exercise for about 10 minutes.

#### 🔗 EXERCISE 1: PUTTING PHILIPPIANS ON THE TIMELINE AND ON THE MAP

Please turn to Appendix C of this curriculum. Your instructor will guide you through one or both of these background exercises.

#### 🔗 EXERCISE 2: AN OUTLINE OF PHILEMON

In the previous lesson, we made observations about the author, recipients, and occasion of Philemon. The next step in the inductive process is to ascertain the book's structure.

1. Mark the major divisions in the letter of Philemon (perhaps with a slash or dividing line). This can be done by repeatedly asking yourself, "What is the author doing now?" When the answer to that question changes, then you have progressed to a new section. Once you have noted the several major divisions in the text, try to label each section in one sentence or phrase. Write it to the sides of the text.

## Philemon

<sup>11</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. <sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. <sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident

*Paul's greeting to Philemon  
(and the church)*

*Paul's prayer of thanksgiving  
for Philemon*

*Paul's appeal to Philemon:  
receive Onesimus as a brother*

*Paul's further instructions for  
and confidence in Philemon*

*Paul's closing and benediction*

*of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.<sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you,<sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.<sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*



**Day 1** Read Acts 16:6–17:1 and 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 with a view to understanding Paul’s experience in Philippi. Then read Acts 28:16-31, which is a description of his imprisonment. This should give you a sketch of the historical context in which Philippians was written. More study on the historical background to Philippians will not be undertaken in this course.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 33

**Day 2** Read through the entire book of Philippians again, this time thinking about the structure. Begin to think about how you would divide the text into its major sections.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 19

**Day 3** Using the text of Philippians included in Lesson 1, mark the major divisions in the letter. This can be done by repeatedly asking yourself as you read, “What is the author doing now?” When the answer to that question changes, then you have progressed to a new section.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 24

**Day 4** Review the major divisions you’ve made. Revise, if necessary, and then divide each major division into significant subsections. Once you have noted the several major and minor divisions in the text, try to label each section with a single sentence or phrase.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 25

**Day 5** Conclude this assignment by drawing up your own outline or chart of Philippians that represents the structure of the letter. Come to the next session prepared to discuss (and possibly present) your outline of Philippians.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 2. Remind the students to bring their Bibles to class each week. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



### § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is Paul a logical, organized communicator? What implications might this have for his readers?
2. Does the order in which Paul handles issues say anything about his priorities?
3. Your own reflections:

### § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Take Courage,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, “Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).





## Your Outline or Chart of Philippians

· *Answer:*

### I. Introduction

#### A. **Philippians 1:1-11**, *The Opening*

1. Senders, recipients, a blessing and encouragement (1:1-6)
2. Paul expresses his affection for the Philippians (1:7-8)
3. A prayer for the Philippians' love to abound (1:9-11)

### II. Body

#### B. **Philippians 1:12-26**, *Paul's Experience in Prison*

1. Paul rejoices in the good effects of his imprisonment (1:12-18a)
2. Paul's release and return to the Philippians for their progress (1:18b-26)

#### C. **Philippians 1:27-2:11**, *An Exhortation to Unity*

1. Philippians exhorted to be united and fearless in conflict (1:27-30)
2. Philippians exhorted to be united and others-focused (2:1-4)
3. Jesus is the ultimate example of the humility needed for unity (2:5-11)

#### D. **Philippians 2:12-18**, *An Exhortation for Sanctification and Joy*

1. A general command to "work out your salvation" (2:12-13)
2. Godly living that would vindicate Paul's labor (2:14-16)
3. Paul's model of joy in suffering (2:17-18)

#### E. **Philippians 2:19-30**, *Information about Timothy and Epaphroditus*

1. Paul hopes to send Timothy, who is others-focused, soon (2:19-24)
2. Paul sends Epaphroditus, who is others-focused also (2:25-30)

#### F. **Philippians 3:1-16**, *Paul's Example and Teaching Counters Falsehood*

1. Warning against those who put confidence in the flesh (3:1-3)
2. Paul could put confidence in the flesh... (3:4-6)
3. ...But he counts everything a loss compared to knowing Christ (3:7-11)
4. Paul is not perfect but presses on (3:12-16)

Answers may vary quite a lot, and it should be noted that even outlines created by scholars sometimes vary. Instructors will need to do their best to understand which points are worth correcting and which differences are less important for the meaning of the text.

**G. Philippians 3:17–4:9, *A Charge and Closing Exhortations***

1. Imitate the godly, not the wicked; stand firm (3:17–4:1)
2. Paul entreats Euodia and Syntyche to agree, others to help (4:2-3)
3. Closing exhortations and Paul's model (4:4-9)

III. Conclusion

**H. Philippians 4:10–23, *Thanksgiving for the Gift and Benediction***

1. Paul's contentment but thanksgiving for the gift (4:10-18)
2. A blessing, greetings, and benediction (4:19-23)

# 3

# Stare at the Fish

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## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

If you've been fulfilling the requirements of this course, you have read through Philippians at least four times and may be tempted to think that you have seen most, if not all, of what is there. But almost certainly, you've seen relatively little. From the ridge of a mountain, you might see the general contours of a valley below. But it is only as you walk down into the valley that you discover all the detail that you missed from the mountain. And it is only as you get down on your hands and knees that you begin to see the complexity and sheer beauty of the valley terrain.

We have been on the mountain ridge overlooking the book of Philippians and we will return there before the class is done. But now we are going to make our way down into the details of the text. So look! Look at the verses, the phrases, the words. Read more slowly. Stop and think. There is a wealth of discovery awaiting you if you are only willing to take the time to look.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- properly distinguish between observations and interpretations
- practice making numerous observations on a single verse
- appreciate the value of staring patiently at a text

**Prayer (5 min):** Throughout the course you, as the instructor, will want to emphasize not only the compatibility, but also the delightful partnership, of study and prayer. See Teaching Notes for a quote to help focus prayer time.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. Explain to your students that for Lessons 3-11, this course will move through the text of Philippians section by section. Although we've attempted to break the text into eight coherent sections, these may not be the primary eight structural divisions of the letter. In designing the course there are other considerations that factored into our decision to divide the text as we have. So even if the students did not recognize these exact divisions, we must adopt them for the sake of the course. See Teaching Notes for a list of the eight sections.

*Optional Break (5 min)*

**Strategies for Study (10 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 3. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide." Explain that employing the study strategies will constitute the bulk of the time spent in the inductive process.



## TEACHING NOTES

Lesson 3 requires students to record observations gleaned from the text, and teaches the concept of creating sentence flows in order to find the main point of the text.

This lesson offers minimal instruction for creating a sentence flow. Unfortunately, time prevents us from giving a thorough explanation of most of the study strategies. So please view this course as an *introduction* to inductive Bible study. If students find certain strategy studies especially helpful, encourage them to acquire additional resources to help them learn more. And, as always, their skillfulness in employing these strategies will grow with practice.

There are two resources that we would recommend for learning, in more detail, how to construct a sentence flow. The first, though a bit technical and incorporating some Greek, is Gordon Fee's *New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002). See pages 41-58. The second resource, introducing the related technique of "phrasing," is William Mounce's *Greek for the Rest of Us* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). See especially pages 55-77 and 109-141. Both resources should be accessible to those who don't know any Greek. If you want, photocopy one or both sections for your students. Even if you choose not to share these resources with your students, it may be helpful for you to review these sections (if you have access to either book) so that you can answer student questions.

As far as additional resources for sentence diagramming (a more advanced visual form of grammatical structure), phrasing, and arcing, we recommend BibleArc.com.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** To lead into the prayer time for this class session, you may choose to share these reflections from John Piper, which are an excerpt from a sermon entitled "Wonderful Things From Your Word" (at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)):

*The pendulum swings back and forth. Some say pray and pray and don't lean on the unspiritual, human work of study. Others say, study and study because God is not going to tell you the meaning of a word in prayer. But the Bible will not*

*have anything to do with this dichotomy. We must study and accurately handle the Word of God, and we must pray or we will not see in the Word the one thing needful, the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6).*

*Benjamin Warfield, a great studier of the Bible, wrote in 1911, “Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books. ‘What!’ is the appropriate response, ‘than ten hours over your books, on your knees?’” (“The Religious Life of Theological Students,” in Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology*, [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983], p. 263). This captures the Biblical spirit. Yes, we must pray. We will not see wonderful things out of God’s Word if he doesn’t open our eyes. But praying cannot replace studying, because Paul says, “Be diligent—study—to handle the Word accurately.”*

**Discussion (55 min):** The eight sections of text, as you would learn by examining the suggested outline or skimming the rest of the course, are as follows:

Philippians 1:1-11	Philippians 2:19-30
Philippians 1:12-26	Philippians 3:1-16
Philippians 1:27–2:11	Philippians 3:17–4:9
Philippians 2:12-18	Philippians 4:10-23

*Optional Break (5 min)*

**Strategies for Study (10 min):**

**Exercise 1: Create a Sentence Flow (10 min)**

**Exercise 2: Distinguishing Observation from Interpretation (15 min):**

This exercise will train the students to distinguish between observations and interpretations.

**Exercise 3: Making Observations (15 min):** This third exercise will prepare the students for the next homework assignment by providing an opportunity for them to practice making observations.

**Closing (5 min):** Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



This course will repeatedly emphasize the importance of “seeing” things in the Bible for yourself. Personal observations and insights into the Word of God are what inductive study is built upon. But how can we see more in the Bible than we already do? Is there any way to train ourselves to be better observers?

This course will offer ten strategies for studying the text of Scripture. The aim of these strategies is to help us become better observers and interpreters. Three strategies will be introduced in this lesson, and then one new strategy will be introduced in each successive lesson. If the three principles of sound interpretation can be thought of as the guard rails for inductive study, these ten study strategies are the motor that propels us along the road. The strategies will be the bulk of what we *do* in inductive study; they will be the bulk of our activity.

### Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.

Many people have found it helpful to present the text of Scripture in different visual layouts. This course will briefly introduce the practice of presenting the biblical text in “sentence flow.”

A sentence flow is a simple way to portray visually the grammatical structure of a text. As such, it does require some knowledge of the English language.

Before explaining how to construct a sentence flow, here is an example of how Philippians 1:3-5 might be put into a sentence flow:

<sup>3</sup> *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,*

<sup>4</sup> *always*

*in every prayer of mine for you all*

*making my prayer*

*with joy,*

<sup>5</sup> *because of your partnership*

*in the gospel*

*from the first day until now.*

The basic idea of a sentence flow is to line up prepositional phrases, adverbs, participles, dependent clauses, etc. under or above the word they most closely modify. Here, then, is how the above sentence would look if we labeled each part of the sentence as a part of speech:

<sup>3</sup> [*This is the main clause, the most basic idea in the sentence*]

<sup>4</sup> [*adverb*]

[*a prepositional phrase*]

[*a participial phrase*]

[*a small but significant prepositional phrase*]

<sup>5</sup> [*a gap in the flow followed by a dependent, “grounding” clause*]

[*a prepositional phrase*]

[*a temporal phrase*]

No doubt you may quibble here and there with how we’ve outlined this text. For the purposes of this course, however, our focus is not on the precise grammatical relationships within the sentence but rather on what we can “see” in the text when it is presented in this new way.<sup>6</sup>

What might one notice if Philippians 1:3-5 is examined as a sentence flow? First, the word “always” might pop out—Paul *always* prays with joy. Why does he pray with joy? The sentence flow suggests that Paul prays with joy because of the Philippians’ partnership with him. What kind of partnership is it? This partnership is described as a partnership “in the gospel.”

Each of these observations could have been made by simply reading the text of Philippians 1:3-5 slowly and carefully. But the strategy of creating a sentence flow may allow you to notice these things more easily. At the least, it should prompt you to ask how the different clauses of a sentence are related.

If this strategy is totally foreign to you and your understanding of English grammar is a bit rusty, then you might want to start by simply writing out the text of Scripture by hand. Even this simple practice will force you to think more carefully about the words and phrases and sentences of the Bible.

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<sup>6</sup> Please do not misunderstand: the more grammatically accurate practice of *sentence diagramming* is a helpful way to study the Bible. Since this requires much more instruction to learn, however, this introductory course will stick with the much simpler method of creating a sentence flow. If you are interested in learning to diagram, BibleArc.com is an excellent resource.

### Exercise 1: Create a Sentence

**Flow (10 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow the students to attempt their own sentence flow.

After a few minutes, discuss this exercise as a class. If you have a chalkboard, whiteboard, iPad, overhead, or other visual device, you might want to use it to represent how you, as the instructor, would create a sentence flow from Philippians 1:6. Again, do not let the conversation be consumed with debate about the particulars of this exercise. Rather, strive to show how this strategy is a helpful one in studying the Bible. If you use anything like sentence flows in your own study of the Word, share your practice with the students.

### 🌀 EXERCISE 1: CREATE A SENTENCE FLOW

We will now throw you into “the deep end of the pool” by asking you to attempt a sentence flow of your own, though we recognize that we’ve provided little instruction on how to do one. Creating a sentence flow is somewhat of a subjective exercise, but will hopefully prove fruitful as you create a few flows.

1. Create an initial sentence flow of Philippians 1:6. Does your sentence flow draw your attention to anything that you may not have noticed otherwise?

Philippians 1:6

*6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

• ANSWER:

*6And*

*I am sure of this,*

*that he who began a good work*

*in you*

*will bring it to completion*

*at the day*

*of Jesus Christ.*

This sentence flow might bring into focus the following observations: 1) what Paul is sure of is spelled out in what follows the word “this”; 2) the good work that God has begun is an internal work—one that is “in” the Philippians; 3) this work will be only completed on the last day; 4) the “last day” is described as “the day of Jesus Christ.”

### 🌀 EXERCISE 2: DISTINGUISHING OBSERVATION FROM INTERPRETATION

The constant injunction of this course will be, “Look! Look! Look!” In order to get beneath a surface-level reading of the Bible, you have to be willing to look at the text—and look again. And stare. But one of the easiest ways to minimize what you observe in the text is to unknowingly blur the distinction between



observations and interpretations. This course will distinguish observations from interpretations in the following way:

*OBSERVATIONS: things in the passage that cannot be disputed; things that are simply there. An example of an observation on Philippians 1:1 is that the letter is addressed from two people.*

*INTERPRETATIONS: attempts to discern meaning from the observations we make. Interpretations can be, and often are, disputed. An example of an interpretation of Philippians 1:1 is that Paul is the primary author because his name comes first.*

2. For the ten statements following Philippians 1:1-5, mark the statement with an “O” if you think it is an observation and an “I” if you think it is an interpretation.

#### Philippians 1:1-5

*<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

- O 1. Paul and Timothy are called servants of Christ Jesus.
- O 2. The title “Christ Jesus” in verse 1 appears in reverse order in verse 2.
- I 3. Paul and Timothy are humbling themselves by calling themselves “servants.”
- I 4. This letter is written by two co-authors.
- O 5. The term “overseers” comes before “deacons.”
- O 6. Verse 3 begins with the first person singular.
- O 7. No distinction is made between saints, overseers, or deacons in verses 2-5.
- I 8. Paul has been in partnership with the Philippian believers for a long time.
- O 9. The Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned in verse 2.
- I 10. The phrase “first day” refers to Lydia’s conversion.

**Exercise 2: Distinguishing Observation from Interpretation (15 min):** This exercise will train the students to distinguish between observations and interpretations. Read the instructions and allow the students to complete their answers for about 5 minutes. Then facilitate discussion for about 10 minutes.

### Exercise 3: Making Observations

**(15 min):** This third exercise will prepare the students for the next homework assignment by providing an opportunity for them to practice making observations.

Read the instructions and allow the students to attempt the first part of this exercise for about 3 minutes and facilitate discussion for about 4 minutes.

Then allow the students to attempt the second part and facilitate discussion again.

### 🔗 EXERCISE 3: MAKING OBSERVATIONS

Interpreting the Bible is certainly a part of inductive study. Observation, however, must precede interpretation. We will now introduce a second strategy for studying the text:

#### Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.

It would be difficult to overstate the value of *recording* observations you make in the text. Not only does this preserve your observations for later use, but also this habit will actually allow you to see more in the Bible. John Piper gives the following personal testimony to this point:

*“In fact I would say, always keep a pad and pen nearby when you read the Bible. I have often counseled people who tell me that they don’t see anything when they read the Bible, ‘Go home and this time, write the text, instead of just reading it. If anything stands out as helpful, make a mark and write down your ideas about it. Keep writing till you are done with that insight. Then keep reading and writing the text till you see something else to write about, or until you are out of time.’*

*The main value in this is that writing forces us to slow down and see what we are reading. Some of us have very bad habits of passive reading that certain types of formal education have bred into us, by forcing us to read quickly when we ought to be reading slowly—thinking as we go. Writing is a way of slowing us down and opening our eyes to see what we do not otherwise see. This struck me so forcefully one day that I paused and wrote:*

*I know not how the light is shed,  
Nor understand this lens.  
I only know that there are eyes  
In pencils and in pens.”<sup>7</sup>*

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7 Taken from *When I Don’t Desire God* by John Piper, © 2004 by Desiring God Foundation, pp. #123-124. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org).

3. For a few minutes, record as many observations (not interpretations) as you can make on Philippians 1:6-8.

Philippians 1:6-8

<sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

ANSWER: Answers will vary

- A1. Verse 6 begins with an “and.”
- A2. The speaker in verses 6-8 is consistently in the first person singular.
- A3. The content of the “this” in verse 6 is unpacked by the rest of the verse.
- A4. The identity of the one who began the good work is implied, not stated.
- A5. The one who begins the good work is also the one who completes it.
- A6. The good work will not be completed until the day of Jesus Christ.
- A7. The speaker feels this way about “all” of the letter’s recipients.
- A8. The second phrase in verse 7 is introduced with a “because.”
- A9. The third phrase in verse 7 is introduced with a “for.”
- A10. The pronoun “my” is not repeated in front of the word “defense” in verse 7.
- A11. The word “in” is not repeated in front of the word “confirmation” in verse 7.
- A12. Verse 8 begins with the word “for.”
- A13. The word “all” is repeated three times in these verses.
- A14. The name “Jesus Christ” (v. 6) is found in reverse order in verse 8.
- A15. The personal pronouns “I,” “my,” and “me,” occur eight times in these verses.

4. After discussing the observations you recorded above, make observations that connect something in verses 6-8 to something in verses 1-5. Record below.

Philippians 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

Please note that this can be very hard for beginners. It is easy for students to over-complicate the process and look for substantial observations about content, rather than simple observations about word placement or sentence structure. It might help to remind students that even seemingly unimportant “jots and tittles” might aid in their understanding later on.

<sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

· ANSWER: Answers will vary

- A1. The string of personal pronouns continuing through verses 6-8 start in verse 3.
- A2. The speaker of verses 3-8 must either be Paul or Timothy, but not both.
- A3. The audience of verses 3-8 is the saints at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.
- A4. The name “Jesus Christ” appears twice and the name “Christ Jesus” appears three times in verses 1-8.
- A5. A duration of time is articulated in both verse 5 and verse 6.
- A6. Paul’s expression of confidence in the Philippians (v. 6) immediately follows his assertion that the Philippians have been partners with him in the gospel.
- A7. The word “because” beginning a phrase in verse 7, also begins a phrase in verse 5.
- A8. The word “grace” (v. 7) occurs earlier in verse 2, and in verse 2 grace is from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The final strategy to be introduced in this lesson won’t be practiced except in the homework assignment. It will be, however, a strategy we practice in each homework assignment as we work through the text of Philippians section by section.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.

As you study a narrower portion of Scripture, you should repeatedly ask yourself, “Now, what is the main point that the author is trying to communicate in this section?” This strategy will help you not only to interpret more faithfully, but as we will see later, answering this question is necessary to an appropriate application of the text.



**Day 1** Create your own sentence flow of Philippians 1:9-11.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 5

**Day 2** For this lesson, your homework will concentrate on Philippians 1:1-11. Read this passage repeatedly, attempting to make as many observations (not interpretations) as possible. In particular, focus on Philippians 1:9-11. Strive to write down at least ten observations working from these verses alone. Your observations should not simply restate the text. In other words, “the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ” is not an insightful observation.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 6

**Day 3** Read Philippians 1:1-11 and record at least ten observations that relate something in verses 9-11 to something in verses 1-8. Record another ten observations that connect something in verses 9-11 to something in verses 12-30.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 18

**Day 4** Record another ten observations linking something in verses 9-11 with something in the following three chapters. Therefore, you should have 40 observations (at least!) by the time you are done with this assignment.

**Day 5** Write out what you take the main point of Philippians 1:1-11 to be.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 3. The students may find this assignment challenging and tedious. Encourage them to persevere, because this assignment will develop their ability to notice things in the text that they would likely miss otherwise. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



### § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. What does Paul rejoice over in these verses? Do you rejoice over similar things?
2. Is Paul's prayer for the Philippians similar to or different from your prayers?
3. Your own reflections:

### § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, "Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor," an online biography at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).



### Sentence Flow of Philippians 1:9-11

• ANSWER:

<sup>9</sup> And

*it is my prayer*

*that your love may abound  
more and more,  
with knowledge and all discernment,*

<sup>10</sup> *so that you may approve what is excellent,  
and so be pure and blameless  
for the day of Christ,*

<sup>11</sup> *filled with the fruit of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ,  
to the glory and praise of God.*

### Observations on Philippians 1:9-11

- A1. Verse 9 begins with the word “and,” linking it closely with the preceding context.
- A2. The repetition of the word “more” in verse 9 makes Paul’s point emphatically.
- A3. The word “all” occurs before “discernment” but not before “knowledge.”
- A4. A decision needs to be made about “with” in verse 9 (does it indicate accompaniment or means?).
- A5. Verse 10 includes two purpose statements.
- A6. The relationship between verse 10 and verse 11 is not explicitly stated.
- A7. The word “fruit” in verse 11 is in the singular.
- A8. Verse 10 has the title “Christ” alone, while verse 11 has the fuller title, “Jesus Christ.”
- A9. Verse 11 does not directly state how the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ.
- A10. The concluding phrase is “to the glory and praise of God,” not “Jesus.”

### Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 1:1-8

- A1. Verse 1 makes it likely that the prayer of verses 9-11 is Paul's prayer for the Philippians.
- A2. Paul has already mentioned prayer in verse 4.
- A3. Verse 9 is explicitly connected to verse 8, in which Paul is testifying to his love for the Philippians.
- A4. The word "and" begins a sentence in vv. 6 and 9.
- A5. The word "love," found in verse 9, does not occur in vv. 1-8.
- A6. The words "knowledge" and "discernment" do not occur in vv. 1-8.
- A7. The phrase "day of Christ" (v. 10) is almost identical to the phrase "day of Jesus Christ" in verse 6.
- A8. The emphasis in verse 6 is different from the emphasis in verse 10 in relation to the day of Christ.
- A9. The word "God," in verse 11, occurs in verse 2 and is followed by "our Father."
- A10. "God" is distinguished from "Jesus" in vv. 2, 8, and 11.





### Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 1:12-30

- A1. Prayer is mentioned again in verse 19, but these are the prayers of the Philippians for Paul.
- A2. The word “and” begins a sentence in 1:14.
- A3. The word “love” is repeated in 1:16.
- A4. Neither “knowledge” nor “discernment” (1:9) is mentioned in these verses.
- A5. The root word “know” occurs immediately in verse 12 (cf. 1:9).
- A6. After discussing discernment and proper approval, Paul shapes their perception of his imprisonment.
- A7. Verses 12 and following are not explicitly tied to 1:9-11 by a conjunction of any kind.
- A8. Paul describes his labor as “fruitful” in 1:22 (cf. 1:11).
- A9. The full title “Jesus Christ” (1:11) is repeated in the first chapter only once, in 1:19.
- A10. The full title “Jesus Christ” (1:11) is found in opposite order only in 1:26.

### Observations on Philippians 1:9-11 in Relation to 2:1-4:23

- A1. Prayer is only mentioned one time outside the first chapter, in Philippians 4:6.
- A2. The concept of love (1:9), though not often repeated, is tied to the important theme of unity in 2:1-2.
- A3. Neither “knowledge” nor “discernment” (1:9) is explicitly mentioned in these verses.
- A4. The root word “know” occurs in thematically related contexts in 3:8 and 3:10.
- A5. The word “blameless” is repeated in 2:15 and 3:6.
- A6. The phrase “day of Christ” (1:10) is repeated in 2:16.
- A7. The word “fruit” is repeated in 4:17.
- A8. Righteousness becomes a prominent theme in Chapter 3. It comes through faith in Christ (cf. 1:11).
- A9. The phrase “to the glory and praise of God” (1:11) is similar to the phrases in 2:11 and 4:20.
- A10. In 2:11 and 4:20 glory is given explicitly to the Father, but Jesus is in the immediate context.

### **Main Point of Philippians 1:1-11**

- *Answer: Paul is thankful for the partnership he has with the Philippians in the gospel. It is his prayer that the Philippians will mature in their faith to the glory of God.*

# 4

## Query the Text

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### § INTRODUCTION

Half of being a good student of the Bible is being inquisitive. Those who study the Bible most diligently and effectively are those who are curious or “disturbed” readers. Here are some of John Piper’s reflections on the importance of asking questions:

*There are several strong forces which oppose our relentless and systematic interrogating of biblical texts. One is that it consumes a great deal of time and energy on one small portion of Scripture. We have been schooled (quite erroneously) that there is a direct correlation between reading a lot and gaining insight. But in fact there is no positive correlation at all between quantity of pages read and quality of insight gained. Just the reverse. Except for a few geniuses, insight diminishes as we try to read more and more. Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20 and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading 30 pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.<sup>8</sup>*

### § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand the necessity of contextual interpretation
- ▷ appreciate the value of asking an incisive question
- ▷ practice answering questions from the context

**Prayer (5 min):** To open the class in prayer, you may want again to stress the inseparability of Bible study and prayer. See Teaching Notes for helpful quote to focus prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. Hendricks outlines some helpful things to be on the watch for including things that are emphasized, repeated, related, alike and unlike, and things that are true to life. Please note that the line between observation and interpretation has been blurred in a few of the suggested answers. While a distinction should be maintained, it is not worthwhile to get bogged down in nit-picky discussion. The purpose of this exercise is to sharpen the skill of being observant, of slowing down and noticing little details in the text. Steer the discussion in this direction. You may also want to suggest that the opening prayer of Philippians 1:9-11 contains many central themes that get fleshed out in the rest of the letter (as is the case with opening

*continued . . .*

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<sup>8</sup> John Piper, “Brothers, Let Us Query the Text,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).



... continued

prayers or paragraphs in many of Paul's letters). Therefore, a close examination of these verses will be rewarded throughout the study of the book.

**Optional Break (5 min)**

**Contextual Interpretation (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 4. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide." Ensure that your students understand the principle of contextual interpretation. This principle must not only be affirmed; it must be consistently practiced!

Lesson 4 focuses on Contextual Interpretation, and asking relevant questions of the text. It is fairly straightforward. In teaching contextual interpretation, remind the students that an accurate handling of the context is something that is easier said than done.

**OUTLINE**

**Prayer (5 min):** In preaching a sermon ("Hold Fast to the Word and Pray for Us," available at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)) from 2 Thessalonians 2:13–3:5, John Piper says the following:

*So the point stands clear and powerful in this text: Prayer and meditation are as inseparable in living the Christian life as are the Spirit of God and the Word of God.*

*Therefore, I beg of you, for the sake of your own growth in grace, and the transformation of your life and family, and the impact of your life on your neighborhood and work and school and extended family—give yourself this year to prayer and meditation. Ponder the Word day and night, and pray for the Spirit's help day and night.*

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Contextual Interpretation (5 min):**

**Exercise 1: Did You Look at the Context? (15 min):** This exercise demonstrates the need for careful, contextual interpretation.

**Exercise 2: What Does It Mean to "Share Your Faith"? (15 min):** This exercise, using the book of Philemon, will demonstrate the fruitfulness of asking a good question and answering it from the context.

**Exercise 3: Ask, Ask, Ask, As You Look, Look, Look! (15 min):** This final exercise will allow the students to practice the skill which they will employ in their homework assignment.

**Closing (5 min):**



How might you feel if someone interviewed you for one hour and then only put one isolated statement that you made into their newspaper article? You would probably be upset, especially if that isolated quote did not represent your entire viewpoint well. It is only fair to expect that a reporter should accurately represent what you did say if they are going to represent your viewpoint to others.

How many times has someone quoted an isolated verse from the Gospels or Paul or the Old Testament, claiming to represent the viewpoint of God? If their statement was “ripped out of context,” then we could be rightfully upset, so reading and interpreting the Bible must be done with the broader context in mind. Our efforts in fairly representing the whole are motivated by our respect for God’s Word. If we do not practice contextual interpretation, we show our lack of love and concern for the author of the Bible: God himself. We would do well to remember the little phrase, “context is king.”

The second principle for sound interpretation is like the first in that it is not something that we only apply selectively. Rather, this principle should govern all of our interpretation; we should always be looking to the broader context in order to understand an author’s meaning. This principle operates on the assumption that the authors of Scripture were coherent thinkers and that the Holy Spirit was at work within them.

### Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author’s meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.

It is often argued that in studying the Bible, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. This is simply a manifestation of sound, contextual interpretation. The broader context often makes sense of an individual passage or verse. Here is a related rule from *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter 1, Section 9:

*IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.<sup>9</sup>*

This rule, stated above, must be used carefully, however. We do not want to blunt the individual force of certain passages by twisting them to say exactly what other passages say. If we were to conceive of the Bible as a chorus, it does not sing in strict unison. Rather, the different books and voices of the Bible sing in harmony—complementary voices within an overall theological unity.

### 🔗 EXERCISE 1: DID YOU LOOK AT THE CONTEXT?

To reinforce the necessity of contextual interpretation, we will briefly examine three fictitious statements that echo popular sentiments.

1. For each statement, examine the broader context of the cited verse, using your own English Bible. Then write a response to the statement, arguing that the speaker has not understood the context of the cited verse.

**Statement #1:** “The Bible clearly teaches that ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8, 16). Therefore, we should never say that God would send anyone to hell. To do that would be a contradiction of his character.”

**ANSWER:** *In this context, the author is stressing the necessity of a believer’s love for his brother. The love of God is to be imitated. Nothing is said in this chapter, however, which would indicate that God’s love and hell are mutually exclusive. In fact, the author speaks freely of God’s judgment (1 John 4:17) and defines love not as saving everyone from hell but as the sacrificial death of Jesus (1 John 4:9-10). The entire book is built upon a sharp distinction between the light and the darkness, between Satan and God.*

**Exercise 1: Did You Look at the Context? (15 min):** This exercise demonstrates the need for careful, contextual interpretation. Invest about 5 minutes in discussing each statement, allowing students to examine the context and write out a response before you open the discussion to the class. If you can think of other verses that are commonly quoted out of context, feel free to substitute these verses for an example. Emphasize to your students how often this kind of thing happens (even among preachers and teachers!) and the need to look at the context.

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<sup>9</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith can be accessed online at [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/), under Chapter I of the Holy Scripture. Last accessed May 13, 2016.

**Statement #2:** “Why are you confronting me about my sin? Don’t you know that the Bible says, ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ (Matthew 7:1)? In telling me that you don’t approve of what I’m doing, you’re judging me.”

- **ANSWER:** *From the broader context it is clear that Jesus is rebuking hypocrisy (cf. Matthew 7:5). He creates a metaphor in which someone unknowingly has a log in their own eye, but is trying to remove the speck in their brother’s eye. But Jesus’ teaching here assumes that it is good and right to remove the speck in a brother’s eye (Matthew 7:5) as long as it is done in the right manner. Jesus certainly did not intend this verse to be used to preclude all correction!*

**Statement #3:** “When I step out onto that football field today, I know that I’m going to win. ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13). God will give me the success.”

- **ANSWER:** *As we will see later in this course, Paul is not referring to athletic endeavors in this verse. Rather, he is talking about a life of contentment in the face of adversity (Philippians 4:11-12). The above statement trivializes Paul’s meaning and applies it to something about which God never made any promises.*

**Exercise 2: What Does It Mean to “Share Your Faith”? (15 min):**

This exercise, using the book of Philemon, will demonstrate the fruitfulness of asking a good question and answering it from the context. It should encourage the students to query the book of Philippians relentlessly for their homework assignment. Before reading the instructions you may choose to ask the students what they immediately think of when presented with the phrase, “sharing your faith.” Then read the directions and allow the students to attempt this exercise for about 5 minutes. Facilitate discussion for about 10 minutes.

**EXERCISE 2: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “SHARE YOUR FAITH”?**

This lesson will introduce a fourth study strategy that relates to contextual interpretation. When you examine a passage’s surrounding context, what are you looking for? That depends on what you are trying to understand. And the way to determine what you are trying to understand is by asking a question that you want answered.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.

Bombard your text with questions. Before you attempt to answer your questions, begin by listing as many helpful and relevant questions as you can. You should even ask questions that you think you already know the answer to.



For example, when you read the phrase “sharing your faith,” what meaning immediately pops into your mind? We would guess that for nearly everyone the phrase “sharing your faith” is roughly equivalent to “verbalizing your personal testimony and/or the gospel to an unbeliever.” Of course, context will determine the meaning of the phrase.

2. In the book of Philemon, the phrase “the sharing of your faith” appears in verse 6 (underlined below). What is the precise meaning of this phrase in the book of Philemon? Answer this question contextually. Circle or underline any other phrases in the book that might provide clues to the meaning of this phrase and write any notes or ideas at the bottom of the page. Be prepared to argue your understanding to the class.

### **Philemon**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. <sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. <sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would

receive me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- **ANSWER:** *The sharing of Philemon’s faith is within the context of the church (not in evangelism!). Since it is likely that Philemon was wealthy—the church met in his house, he owned slaves, he had a guest room—it could refer to his generosity or hospitality. In this instance, the sharing of Philemon’s faith might be demonstrated in his reception of Onesimus. It is also possible that the phrase refers more broadly to the love that Philemon shows in refreshing the hearts of the saints.*

**Exercise 3: Ask, Ask, Ask, As You Look, Look, Look! (15 min):**

This final exercise will allow the students to practice the skill which they will employ in their homework assignment. Read the instructions, allow the students to complete this exercise in about 5 minutes and then facilitate discussion for about 10 minutes. Stress that not every question will have an answer; nevertheless, it is important to learn how to ask creative questions that will stretch inquiry.

**EXERCISE 3: ASK, ASK, ASK, AS YOU LOOK, LOOK, LOOK!**

In the final exercise of this lesson we will actually practice the study strategy introduced above.

3. Using the text of Philemon reproduced above, generate a list of questions about this book that you would like answered. Think of as many helpful and relevant questions as you can.

• **ANSWER:**

- A1. *Why does Paul also address this letter to Apphia and Archippus?*
- A2. *How does the “sharing of faith” become “effective” unto knowledge?*
- A3. *Is Paul’s strategy of appealing rather than commanding motivated pragmatically?*
- A4. *Why does Paul mention that he is an old man and prisoner (v. 9)?*
- A5. *How did Paul meet Onesimus?*
- A6. *How was Onesimus serving Paul?*
- A7. *Is this letter in any way manipulative? Should we imitate Paul’s method of appeal?*
- A8. *Does Paul offer to pay Onesimus’s debt, but then express his confidence that Philemon will overlook any existing debt?*
- A9. *How does Paul’s expression of confidence (v. 21) relate to his appeal?*
- A10. *What was slavery like in the first-century Roman empire?*



**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 1:12-26. Read this passage repeatedly. Generate five questions and record them on the provided sheet. Attempt to answer these questions from the context, but focus on asking good questions. If you are reading slowly and thoughtfully, this daily assignment should take you about 30 minutes! *Making observations and asking penetrating questions is a fundamental skill to fruitful interpretation*, so be diligent and thorough!

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 31

**Day 2** Generate another five stimulating questions on Philippians 1:12-26 and try to answer them from the context, if possible. Remember that looking at the broader context should always be the first step in answering your questions.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 8

**Day 3** Generate another five questions. If you can't discover the answers, don't worry; just come up with the most penetrating questions that you can.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 11

**Day 4** Review the fifteen questions that you've generated. Determine which five are the most incisive. Be prepared to share these five questions with the class.

**Day 5** Discern the main point of Philippians 1:12-26 and write it down.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled "Homework" in Lesson 4. Point the students back to the exhortation with which this lesson opened. In it, John Piper suggested taking two hours to ask ten questions of one verse: Galatians 2:20. This homework assignment, by comparison, will be easy. Continue to remind the students to bring their English Bibles to class next week (and every week). Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



### § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is asking questions of the Bible disrespectful to God, or is it honoring to God? Explain.
2. What effect did Paul intend these verses to have on his readers? Do they have this effect on you?
3. Your own reflections:

### § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Brothers, Let Us Query the Text,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, “How to Query God,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).



### Questions on Philippians 1:12-26

· *Answer:*

- A1. *Why does Paul want the Philippians to know v. 12? Why start the body of his letter this way?*
- A2. *What does it mean for the gospel to “advance” (v. 12)? Why choose this word?*
- A3. *Who are “all the rest” in v. 13? Are they other prisoners, believers, or everyone?*
- A4. *How does Paul’s imprisonment inspire confidence and boldness (v. 14)?*
- A5. *Is preaching Christ from envy and rivalry a matter of motives and not content?*
- A6. *How would the proclamation of Christ afflict Paul in his imprisonment (v. 17)?*
- A7. *Why doesn’t Paul denounce those who are trying to afflict him?*
- A8. *Why does Paul refer to the “Spirit of Jesus Christ” in v. 19? Why not choose another title for the Spirit?*
- A9. *What kind of deliverance is envisioned in v. 19? Is it deliverance from prison?*
- A10. *Is Paul convinced that he will be released from prison? How much do we read into the “I know” phrases of vv. 19 and 25?*
- A11. *Would Paul’s shame be something experienced in this life or at the judgment (v. 20)?*
- A12. *Why didn’t Paul write, “to live is Christ, and to die is Christ” (v. 21)?*
- A13. *What is the logical connection between v. 20 and v. 21?*
- A14. *Does the sentence, “Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell” (v. 22), represent real indecision? If not, why phrase his sentiments in this way?*
- A15. *Why does Paul include vv. 20-26? What purpose do these verses serve?*

### **Main Point of Philippians 1:12-26**

- *Answer: Paul encourages the Philippians by sharing how God is being glorified in his imprisonment. He confides in them that God would be glorified in his death, but expresses his confidence that he will be restored to them.*

# Scripture Interpreting Scripture

# 5

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

Two of the key presuppositions of this course are that “the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, and without error in the original manuscripts” and that “God’s intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right.”<sup>10</sup> As Christians, we build our lives on what God says in the Bible—the whole Bible and nothing else.

John Piper, reflecting on Jude 1:3 (“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”) writes:

*For us one of the most important phrases in verse 3 is “once for all.” Here we are 2,000 years after the faith was first delivered to the church, and we are surrounded with hundreds of people and sects and cults who claim to have a new word of revelation that now completes God’s word to mankind. Mohammed offered his Koran. Joseph Smith his Book of Mormon. Sun Moon his Divine Principle. And you meet people every day who consider every contemporary intellectual trend as a suitable replacement for the Bible.*

*But please notice very carefully. Jude taught that the faith has been once for all delivered to the saints. God’s revelation concerning the doctrinal content of our faith is finished. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Anyone who comes along and claims to have a new word from God to add to the faith once for all delivered to the saints is against Scripture.*

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Psalm 119:18 (“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law”) or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. As your students list questions, you may want to list them on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or screen. The discussion of the homework assignment is designed to accomplish at least two things: 1) demonstrate to the students the great number of fruitful questions that may be asked of a passage; 2) spark genuine interest in further study. Asking good questions is half the battle in profitable inductive study!

*Break (5 min)*

**Canonical Interpretation (10 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 5. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” It might be

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<sup>10</sup> These excerpts are from Bethlehem College & Seminary’s Affirmation of Faith, sections 1.1 and 1.2.

... continued

helpful to visually represent the onion illustration. After reading the quotations from Packer aloud, allow the students some time to summarize. Then discuss their summaries, ensuring that they understand what canonical interpretation is and how it relates to contextual interpretation.

*The reason we have a Bible is that the church of the third and fourth century recognized that God had spoken once for all in these writings. The canon was closed, and every other claim to truth is now measured by the standard of the faith once for all delivered to the saints."*

This lesson will draw out some of the implications of accepting the whole Bible as Christian Scripture. Indeed, we will see that these key presuppositions inform our inductive methodology.

#### 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand the necessity of contextual interpretation
- ▷ practice interpreting the New Testament with the context of the Old Testament
- ▷ learn the importance of checking cross-references

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11 John Piper, "Contend for the Faith," an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).





Lesson 5 teaches students how to use cross-references, keeping in mind the canonicity of Scripture, and how the authors of the New Testament thought of and used the Old Testament.

There is a substantial amount of overlap between the various study strategies. Even though each strategy is presented individually, in practice these strategies will probably run together. So, for example, a student might observe that Paul uses a figure of speech in Philemon 1:4: the *hearts* of the saints have been *refreshed*. This observation might quickly prompt the question, “What does it mean for a heart to be refreshed?” To answer this question, the student might examine the immediate context and then check the cross-references provided in their Bible. Examining the cross-references might confirm that a word study should be done on the word “refresh” or perhaps a thematic study on ministry to the saints. As you might imagine, inductive study proceeding along these lines would use the various study strategies in rapid succession or even simultaneously. Therefore, if, during this lesson, students begin to employ strategies introduced in later lessons as they check the cross-references, don’t stop them. Rather, emphasize that the strategies are like a tool kit. Someone using the tools might have several tools on the floor at once, and may use two tools in conjunction at times. By learning how to use each tool on its own, however, the student will be better equipped to use the tools together.

Biblegateway.com is an extremely helpful resource. This course will directly introduce this website in Lesson 7, but you might want to show your students this website before then.

In the *Instructor’s Introduction*, you will find our rationale for including memorization in our study of the Bible. Emphasize the importance and benefits of memorizing Scripture, especially if the portion memorized is one that is accurately understood through study. You may want to direct your students to the *Additional Resources* section, and especially the sermon entitled, “Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night,” and the article, “Why Memorize Scripture?” (The other sermons exemplify a study of the use of the Old Testament in the New.)

In addition, there is a very helpful recorded answer at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org) that John Piper gives to the question, “How do you memorize Scripture?” If you have the capability, you may want to play this audio clip for your students before they tackle the homework assignment.

## 🔗 OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Psalm 119:18 (“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law”) or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Canonical Interpretation (10 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 5. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Exercise 1: Seeing the Old in the New (20 min):** This exercise is designed to expose students to the exciting practice of studying how the New Testament uses the Old.

**Exercise: Don’t Neglect Those Cross-References! (20 min):** Introduce the strategy of looking up cross-references.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework.”



In the last lesson, we learned about contextual interpretation and the importance of studying the surrounding context. The question may have arisen, however, of how broad the surrounding context really is. If we are studying a verse in Philippians, what is the relevant context? Is it the verses that come immediately before and after? Is it the paragraph or chapter within which the verse occurs? Maybe it's the entire book of Philippians? These are difficult questions to answer. Perhaps an illustration will help.

Think of the relevant context being like an onion. At the core of the onion is your particular verse or passage. The layer that is the most important is the layer that immediately surrounds and “touches” your verse or passage. But beyond that context is another layer—maybe the paragraph or chapter. Beyond that is the layer of the entire biblical book, then all the writings of a particular biblical author (e.g., Paul), then perhaps the Old or New Testaments. Eventually, the thickest and outermost layer is the whole Bible itself.

In contextual interpretation we are constantly deciding how many layers of the onion we should peel off before we stop and study. Obviously one cannot study the entire Bible every time one desires to know the meaning of an individual verse. On the other hand, however, as we read any one verse in the Bible we must remember its place in the whole.

Remembering all the layers of context while interpreting is what we will call *canonical interpretation*. Canonical interpretation is the broadest form of contextual interpretation. Here is J. I. Packer’s effort to describe canonical interpretation. Read carefully, as you will be asked to summarize below.

*“Since all sixty-six books come ultimately from the mind of our self-revealing God, they should be read not just as separate items (though obviously one must start by doing that), but also as parts of a whole. They must be appreciated not only in their particular individuality of genre and style, but also as a coherent, internally connected organism of teaching. This, after all (and here I throw down the gauntlet to some of my academic peers), is what examination shows them to be. It is fashionable these days for Scripture scholars to look for substantive differences of conviction between biblical writers, but this is in my view an inquiry as shallow and stultifying as it is unfruitful. Much more significant is the truly amazing unity of viewpoint, doctrine, and vision that this heterogeneous library of occasional*

writings, put together by more than forty writers over more than a millennium, displays. The old way of stating the principle that the internal coherence of Scripture should be a heuristic maxim for interpreters was to require that the analogy of Scripture be observed. This is the requirement which the twentieth Anglican Article enforces when it says that the church may not “so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” The modern way of expressing the point is to require that interpretation be canonical, each passage being interpreted kerygmatically and normatively as part of the whole body of God’s revealed instruction. Accepting this requirement, I infer from it the way in which theology should seek to be systematic: not by trying to go behind or beyond what the texts affirm (the common caricature of systematic theology), but by making clear the links between items in the whole compendium of biblical thought.”<sup>12</sup>

And a little later in the same article Packer writes:

“My constant purpose was and is to [report] on every subject I handle a genuinely canonical interpretation of Scripture—a view that in its coherence embraces and expresses the thrust of all the biblical passages and units of thought that bear on my theme—a total, integrated view built out of biblical material in such a way that, if the writers of the various books knew what I had made of what they taught, they would nod their heads and say that I had got them right.”

1. Packer’s description is an excellent (though somewhat technical) summary of canonical interpretation. Reread through these excerpts and then try to summarize his thoughts below. According to Packer, what is canonical interpretation and how might it affect our inductive study of the Bible?
- **ANSWER:** *Canonical interpretation deliberately attempts to understand the parts of the Bible in the light of the whole. It assumes that the whole Bible presents a coherent and integrated unity, and that Scripture does not contradict, but rather complements, itself. Canonical interpretation, therefore, mandates that our inductive study of the Bible remain aware of a passage’s canonical context as we interpret. It also implies the need for checking our interpretation of individual passages against what Scripture teaches in other places.*

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12 J. I. Packer, “In Quest of Canonical Interpretation,” as cited in Robert K. Johnson, *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*, 1985. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com).

## 🔗 EXERCISE 1: SEEING THE OLD IN THE NEW

An immediate and fruitful application of canonical interpretation is to scour the New Testament for allusions to and citations of the Old Testament. This area of study has flowered in recent years as scholars have realized how important the Old Testament is in shaping the thinking of the New Testament authors.

Although it may be a matter of common sense, it is important to remember that Jesus and his disciples knew the *Old Testament* as “Scripture.” The New Testament, at least in the form we have it today, was unknown to any of the earliest Christians. It was the Old Testament that was memorized, preached, and cherished in the first century. Therefore, if we want to understand the New Testament, we must understand how Jesus and his disciples read and interpreted the Old Testament.

2. This exercise will concentrate on Jesus’ use of Deuteronomy during his temptation. Read both the New Testament context and the Old Testament context, and record your thoughts below on how the context of Deuteronomy 8:1-10 informs our interpretation of Matthew 4:1-4.

Matthew 4:1-4

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup> And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Deuteronomy 8:1-10

<sup>1</sup> The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. <sup>2</sup> And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your

clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup> So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. <sup>7</sup> For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, <sup>8</sup> a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, <sup>9</sup> a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. <sup>10</sup> And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

- **ANSWER:** The parallels between these texts (underlined above) are remarkable. They suggest that Jesus is doing more than merely “proof-texting” his obedience. Rather, he is identifying himself as the faithful Israelite, who does in the wilderness what Israel should have done. Jesus will not attempt to exercise his own power in order to meet his needs. He will humble himself and rely on God’s promises and perfect plan. And in so doing, he can redeem a people from the bondage of sin and lead them into the promised land. So Jesus quotes the Old Testament aware of the broader context.

Please note that we must also look for uses of the Old Testament in the Old Testament. Some of the later Old Testament books drew heavily and explicitly from books that were written earlier.

Here, then, is a simple discipline for practicing canonical interpretation: every time a part of Scripture quotes or alludes to another part of Scripture, look up the original context and read the broader context!

## 🔗 EXERCISE 2: DON’T NEGLECT THOSE CROSS-REFERENCES!

Investigating Old Testament citations and allusions is made easy by most modern versions of the English Bible. Most Bibles have an extensive system of cross-references that will direct you to other relevant passages of Scripture, whether those passages are quoted or alluded to, whether they address a similar theme, or whether they use some of the same words or phrasing. Cross-references are a treasure trove for the student who is studying the Bible inductively!

## Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.

We will now practice checking the cross-references provided for a passage in Philemon. If you have an English Bible with you that includes cross-references, use that Bible to examine the cross-references listed for this passage. If not, then use the cross-references listed below.

Philemon 1:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.*

Cross-References:

Philemon 1:4 : Rom 1:8, 9

Philemon 1:5 : Col 1:4

Philemon 1:5 : Eph 1:15

Philemon 1:6 : Phil 1:9; Col 1:9

Philemon 1:7 : 2 Cor 7:4, 13; Col 4:11

Philemon 1:7 : Philemon 1:20; 2 Tim 1:16; Rom 15:32; 2 Cor 7:13<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> These cross-references were taken from the ESV Bible as reproduced at the website <http://www.biblegateway.com>. If students do not have access to a Bible with cross-references, this website will allow you to view them.

What do you do when you have looked up a cross-reference? At this point, the other study strategies come into play, primarily the strategy of observation. What similarities or differences exist between your verse and its cross-reference? Can we learn anything from the immediate context of the cross-reference which sheds light on our context? In later lessons, students will learn to use cross-references to suggest fruitful word studies or thematic studies.

- As you check these cross-references, take notes on observations you make about each one and its relation to Philemon 1:4-7.

Cross-Reference	NOTES
Romans 1:8, 9	<i>Paul frequently thanks God for his converts in prayer. His thanksgiving usually centers on their faith and love.</i>
Colossians 1:4	<i>Faith toward God and love toward saints are also joined in this passage.</i>
Ephesians 1:15	<i>Faith toward God and love toward saints are joined in this passage.</i>
Philippians 1:9	<i>There exists some relationship between faith, love, and knowledge. Paul wants knowledge to “abound” or be “full.”</i>
Colossians 1:9	<i>In this passage the knowledge is of God’s will as opposed to knowledge of “every good thing that is in us.”</i>
2 Corinthians 7:4	<i>Joy and comfort are also brought together in this passage.</i>
2 Corinthians 7:13	<i>This passage brings together comfort and refreshment. The comfort seems to be spiritual comfort.</i>
Colossians 4:11	<i>Paul is comforted by his fellow workers, which is the term Paul uses for Philemon also (cf. Philemon 1:1).</i>
Philemon 1:20	<i>Paul has already been refreshed by Philemon’s love (though indirectly) and is asking for more.</i>
2 Timothy 1:16	<i>Paul was refreshed by Onesiphorus while in prison. This is reminiscent of Onesimus’s ministry to Paul.</i>
Romans 15:32	<i>Refreshment can come from Christian company. It equips Paul for further ministry.</i>
2 Corinthians 7:13	<i>Refreshment can come through the joy of another believer.</i>





**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 1:27–2:11. Read this passage repeatedly. Begin to check all the cross-references provided for this text, especially noting any Old Testament citations or allusions.

Memorization is the key to meditation! Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 1 to memorize that is personally significant.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 14

**Day 2** Continue your search through the cross-references. Take notes on anything significant that you find.

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 1 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Day 3** Continue your study of the cross-references. If you identify any relevant Old Testament passages (there is at least one), study the entire Old Testament chapter in which the allusion or quotation is found. Make special note of where the quoted verse appears in the chapter and what function it has in its Old Testament context. Record your observations on the provided sheet.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 20

**Day 4** Continuing from the previous day, focus on discerning how the Old Testament verse is being used in its New Testament context. What illumination does the Old Testament context shed on Philippians? Record your thoughts.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 5. Ensure that the students understand the new component of Bible memorization. Remind them that they will be held accountable for memorizing their verse at the beginning of the next class session. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.

**Day 5** Continue to think about how the Old Testament shapes this section of Philippians, and finish your study of the cross-references. Record what you take to be the main point of this section.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.







### Notes on the Cross-References to Philippians 1:27–2:11

- **Answer:** *Isaiah 45 talks about the Lord’s anointed one, Cyrus (the word “anointed one” is the word for “Messiah” or “Christ”). The deep irony is that the Lord will use a pagan ruler to bring about his plans of redemption for his people (Isaiah 45:1-8). Israel balks at the wisdom in this decision (Isa 45:9-10), but the Lord chastises them in a defense of his sovereign wisdom (Isa 45:11-13). The Lord then asserts his plans to save Israel, and repeatedly claims that he is the only God (Isa 45:14-22). He demands praise from all people (Isa 45:22-25).*

*Therefore, in its original context, Isaiah 45:23 is explicitly focused on the one and only God (see Isa 45:22). Ascribing Isaiah 45:23 to Jesus then exalts him to the level of God—this is perhaps one of the strongest statements of Jesus’ deity! In addition, Jesus’ humiliation and exaltation is God’s strange and unexpected work of redemption. Truly, God is one who hides himself (Isa 45:15), but no one expected that God would hide himself in human flesh! Jesus is the antitype of Cyrus, the one who knows God more intimately than anyone else, because he is God himself.*

*The background of Isaiah 45 also helps us answer a key question within Philippians: is the bowing of the knee and confession voluntary or compelled? Isaiah 45:24 would suggest the latter: “Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him” (added emphasis).*

*For those who are familiar, then, with the Old Testament background, the quotation from Isaiah brings the discourse in Philippians into a rich, historical and literary context. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s wisdom and righteousness.*

*The logic of Philippians is also present in Isaiah 53: “Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the*

*This Instructor’s Guide will not include notes on all the cross-references listed for Philippians 1:27–2:11. Rather, we intend for you to check these for yourself and facilitate discussion on them during class. This suggested answer will rather focus on the primary Old Testament passage in view here, which is Isaiah 45, quoted in Philippians 2:10. The students should have at least discovered this Old Testament passage.*

transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12, added emphasis). Other verses in Isaiah with provocative connections to Philippians include Isaiah 49:6 and Isaiah 52:13-15.

There are many other connections between Philippians and the servant language of Isaiah 40-66.

*Additional observations:*

- ▷ It has been granted to the Philippians to both believe in Christ and to suffer for him (Phil 1:29)!
- ▷ The thick description of Christ is used to give massive support to Philippians 2:4, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
- ▷ The theme of unity is prominent throughout this section (cf. 1:27, 2:2).
- ▷ Paul quotes Isa 45:23 in Rom 14:11 to support the idea that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.
- ▷ Should we humble ourselves to serve others as Christ did in order that God might exalt us, as he exalted Christ? There is probably a strain of Christian Hedonism here.

#### **Main Point of Philippians 1:27–2:11**

- **ANSWER:** Paul exhorts the Philippians to “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,” which includes living in unity, with boldness, and in humility (as Christ lived).

# Grasping the Flow

# 6

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

You may have heard the common adage, “When you see a *therefore*, you should ask what it is *there for*.” This is certainly helpful, but there are also many other words that should cause us to slow down and query the text.

These connecting words are like the links between train cars. In a train, each train car must be in the proper order and attached both to each other and an engine. Only then can the train barrel down the tracks with any kind of force. Likewise, in reading the Bible, if you skim over the conjunctions that hold the argument together, whole sections of Scripture will be like idle train cars sitting in the train yard. Your reading of the Word will lack the power and coherence that God intended.

Here is John Piper’s testimony to this approach to reading Scripture:

*The point of seeing propositions in relationship is not merely to elucidate the meaning of each proposition, but also to help us grasp the flow of an author’s argument. It was a life-changing revelation to me when I discovered that Paul, for example, did not merely make a collection of divine pronouncements, but that he argued. This meant, for me, a whole new approach to Bible reading.<sup>14</sup>*

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of logical interpretation
- identify key words that signify logic
- make an amplified paraphrase of a verse’s logic

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Paul’s encouragement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7 (“Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything”) or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):** Instruct the class to gather into groups of two to four. Ask the students to recite the memory verse that they chose to the other members of their group. Instruct the students to share *why* they chose that particular verse to memorize. If you have a smaller class, recitation can be done without breaking into smaller groups.

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment. There is probably much more here than you could possibly discuss in 50 minutes. Therefore, after exploring some of the more provocative cross-references, concentrate your time on the use of Isaiah 45. Stress to your students that it is only through a careful examination of the Old

... continued

14 John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis: Discovering the Original Meaning of Scriptural Texts* (a booklet published by Desiring God, 1999), 18.



## TEACHING NOTES

... continued

Testament that one begins to see just how powerful Philippians 2:10 is as an argument for the deity of Christ! Truly understanding the deity of Christ makes his incarnation all the more stunning and makes the command to imitate him in his humility all the more powerful!

*Break (5 min)*

### **Logical Interpretation (5 min):**

Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 6. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” Feel free to insert your own comments and thoughts on the importance of recognizing the Bible’s logic. If you have had a “revelation” similar to the one Piper describes in the introduction, share that personal testimony.

Lesson 6 introduces Logical Paraphrasing and the concept of following the logical of propositions within the text. Just as a sentence flow is a simpler alternative to sentence diagramming, the method of logical paraphrasing introduced in this lesson is the simpler counterpart to “arc-ing.” For an introduction to arcing, consult the booklet *Biblical Exegesis* that is listed in the Additional Resources section of this lesson, or visit BibleArc.com for free online tutorials and other Bible study resources. For a much shorter explanation of what arcing is, see the answer to the question, “Where can I learn more about the Bible study method called ‘arc-ing?’” found at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)

Please note that in creating a logical paraphrase of a biblical text, the final product will in some ways look very similar to paraphrastic renderings of the New Testament, such as *The Message*. *The Message* will be introduced to the students in Lesson 8. Though this contemporary paraphrase of the Bible is not the best primary source for an English text from which to study, nevertheless creating a paraphrase of the text as Eugene Peterson has done is an incredibly helpful exercise for increasing one’s own understanding as well as for teaching others. Therefore, if you feel that it would be helpful to present *The Message* as another example of a logical paraphrase, you may.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Paul’s encouragement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:7.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):**

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Logical Interpretation (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 6. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Exercise 1: The Building Blocks of Logic (15 min):**



**Exercise 2: Propositions in Relationship (15 min):**

**Exercise 3: Logical Paraphrasing (15 min):**

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 6. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



In this lesson, we will introduce what may be called a logical interpretation of Scripture. By this, we simply mean that in order to interpret Scripture rightly, one must understand how the propositions of Scripture are logically related. The goal of logical interpretation is to think the thoughts of the author of Scripture after him.

Obviously, some sections of Scripture are more tightly argued than others. Therefore, although logical interpretation might be most fruitful in the epistles of the New Testament, for example, logical interpretation can be applied to any passage of any biblical book—even Proverbs and the Psalms.

**Exercise 1: The Building Blocks of Logic (15 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow your students a few minutes to underline all the logical “key words.” When they have finished, discuss which words they have underlined and why. You may want to write these words on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or screen. After all the key words in Philemon 1:13-17 have been identified and discussed, read aloud the accompanying list of key words and phrases. What appears as a blank space in the *Student’s Workbook* appears in this *Instructor’s Guide* as an underlined word. Therefore, you will need to provide the students with the correct word to fill in each blank. Once the students have filled in all the blank spaces, pause to discuss this list. Ask them if they can think of other words or phrases that could have been included. This list is not exhaustive!

### EXERCISE 1: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF LOGIC

The first step in interpreting the logic of the Bible is to identify the words that signify logical connections. These key words will signal how the argument is constructed.

1. In the following paragraph, underline all the words that, in your mind, somehow signify logical relationships.

#### Philemon 1:13-17

<sup>13</sup> *I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,* <sup>14</sup> *but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.* <sup>15</sup> *For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,* <sup>16</sup> *no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* <sup>17</sup> *So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.*

Now record the missing key words and phrases as they are read by your teacher.

and, moreover, furthermore, likewise, neither, nor, then, or, but,  
while, on the one hand, in that, by, even as, as...so, like, just as,  
not...but, that is, for, because, since, therefore, consequently, accordingly,  
so that, that, in order that, if...then, except, when, whenever, after,  
before, where, wherever, so, although, yet, nevertheless, however

As you are marking the biblical text in your inductive study, you should somehow identify these key words (listed above), whether you circle, underline, or highlight them.

## 🔗 EXERCISE 2: PROPOSITIONS IN RELATIONSHIP

In logical interpretation, a student of the Word reads slowly and thinks carefully about the propositions of the text. John Piper describes propositions:

*“Words begin to convey determinate meanings only as they are seen to be parts of a proposition. Propositions are the basic building blocks of a text. ...A proposition is a simple assertion about something. The word “Jesus” conveys no determinate meaning when I say it alone. But, when I say, “Jesus wept,” a very clear meaning is conveyed because this statement is a proposition.”<sup>15</sup>*

Once propositions are identified, the relationship between propositions is considered. This is where the conjunctions (listed above) come into play.

2. Describe in detail the logical relationship between the following propositions. Underline any key words. Record your own thoughts before discussing as a class.

1. I would have been glad to keep him with me,
2. in order that he might serve me on your behalf

- **ANSWER:** *The first proposition describes an action; the second proposition gives the intended purpose for that action. The key words are “in order that.”*

Be sure to read the text in this section aloud for your students!

**Exercise 2: Propositions in Relationship (15 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then proceed through each set of propositions, investing approximately 5 minutes in each set. After allowing the students about 2 minutes to think about the relationship between these propositions, facilitate discussion for about 3 minutes. Ask students to describe the logic.

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15 John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis*, 16-17.

1. no longer as a slave
2. but more than a slave,
3. as a beloved brother

· **ANSWER:** *The first and second propositions are put in contrast; one is denied so the other can be affirmed. The third proposition clarifies what is meant by the second.*

1. if you consider me your partner,
2. [then] receive him

· **ANSWER:** *The first proposition states a condition. If the condition is met, the second proposition gives a command. Notice that we have to supply the key word here.*

**Exercise 3: Logical Paraphrasing**

**(15 min):** In this final exercise, the students are finally introduced to the strategy of logical paraphrasing. Invest about 5 minutes in reviewing the instructions and example before allowing the students to attempt their own paraphrase (for about another 5 minutes). Facilitate discussion for about 5 minutes, asking for several students to volunteer to read the paraphrases they composed. Again, concentrate on the strategy itself rather than the particulars of the answers. Show them why this kind of strategy is helpful in interpretation.

**EXERCISE 3: LOGICAL PARAPHRASING**

In the preceding exercise we described the logical relationship between certain propositions. If we were to transcribe our descriptions, then we would essentially be using the sixth strategy that this course presents.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.

To paraphrase the logic of a section of Scripture, we start by identifying key words. Next, we consider the relationships between the propositions in the text. Then, we actually write an amplified paraphrase that explicitly communicates our understanding of the text’s logic.

Writing such a paraphrase is simply a tool for uncovering the logical progression of the author's argument. It is intended to give the student a better grasp of the main point of the passage and an understanding of how each proposition clarifies, supports, or qualifies the main point. In addition, logical paraphrasing will often force a student to ask questions of the text that they might not otherwise ask.

The following paraphrase of Philemon 1:13-14 demonstrates the use of this sixth strategy. Study this example before trying a paraphrase of your own. Notice that some of the antecedents of the pronouns in this text have been supplied by the context.

Philemon 1:13-14

*<sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.*

Logical Paraphrase:

*I, Paul, would have been glad to keep Onesimus with me, so that by staying with me, he might serve me on your behalf, Philemon. Onesimus could have served me while I am still in prison. And you know that I am in prison for the sake of the gospel. But I preferred not to keep him with me without your explicit consent. Therefore I'm sending him back to you in order that your goodness might not be forced by my decision, but, if you did decide to send him to me, that decision would flow from your own accord. And I believe that voluntary goodness is much better than compelled goodness.*

Summary Statement of the Logic:

*The reason Paul did not keep Onesimus was so that Philemon's goodness would not be compelled.*

3. Write a paraphrase of Philemon 1:15-17 that clarifies the logical relationships between propositions and makes explicit what you think is implied. Then compose a statement that adequately summarizes the main logical point of the passage.

Philemon 1:15-17

<sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

· ANSWER:

*Logical Paraphrase:*

Another reason why I am sending Onesimus back to you, Philemon, is because God may have had a higher purpose in separating him from you. Maybe he separated Onesimus from you so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave—that is, as a fellow believer and beloved brother in Christ. He is already a beloved brother to me, but he should be one to you much more so, because he will be related to you by an earthly relationship and now also by an eternal, spiritual relationship. Therefore, if you consider me your partner—and I know that you do, Philemon!—then receive Onesimus in exactly the same way that you would receive me—that is, as a spiritual brother and with love and hospitality

*Summary Statement of the Logic:*

Paul suggests that Onesimus was parted from Philemon so that Philemon could receive Onesimus as a beloved brother, which is what Paul wants Philemon to do.



**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 2:12-18. Read this passage repeatedly. In addition to recording your observations and questions, practice logical interpretation. Begin by identifying and underlining all the words that signify logical relationships. If it helps you to create a sentence flow of this text, do that first.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 15

**Day 2** Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-13 in order to make the logic and sense of these verses explicit. Choose your words carefully.

**Day 3** Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:14-16.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 21

**Day 4** Write a logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:17-18 and then review your logical paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-18. Does it accurately convey the sense of this passage? Has this assignment increased your understanding of the passage? Has it forced you to ask questions that you may not have asked otherwise? Be prepared to discuss your paraphrase during the next class period.

**Day 5** Discern the main point of Philippians 2:12-18 and write it down.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 6. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



## § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Does God's sovereign work (Philippians 2:13) *motivate* or *discourage* you from pursuing sanctification?
2. Are you motivated to prove yourself blameless and innocent?
3. Your own reflections:

## § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- John Piper, "Build Your Life on the Mercies of God," an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- John Piper, *Biblical Exegesis*, an online booklet at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).





### A Logical Paraphrase of Philippians 2:12-18

- **ANSWER:** (Answers will vary)

*Logical Paraphrase:*

*Therefore, my beloved, because one day every knee will bow to Christ, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You've been doing this faithfully, but now, even though I'm not with you, I want you to continue working out your salvation in my absence. And the only reason that you are able to do this is because it is God himself who is at work in you, both at the level of your will and at the level of your actions. God enables you to work out your salvation and he does this for his good pleasure. The first application of this exhortation that I want to mention is that you should do all things without grumbling or questioning. Do this in order that you may be blameless and innocent—that is, children of God without blemish, even though you are in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. If you do this you will shine as lights in this dark world, by holding fast to the word of life. And this is what I want you to do, in order that in the day of Christ I may be proud that my work among you did not prove fruitless. The thought of this gives me hope, and so even if my life will be spent as an offering to God on behalf of your faith, nevertheless I will still be glad and rejoice with you all. In the same way, and for the same reasons, you should be glad and rejoice with me.*

*Summary Statement of the Logic:*

*Paul doesn't want his efforts among the Philippians to be in vain. So he exhorts them to work out their salvation because God is at work in them.*

### Main Point of Philippians 2:12-18

- **ANSWER:** Paul exhorts the Philippians to work out their salvation in the midst of suffering (imitating his example) because God is at work in them.



# “Every Word of God Proves True”

# 7

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

John Piper writes about John Bunyan:

*One of the greatest scenes in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is when Christian recalls in the dungeon of Doubting-castle that he has a key to the door. Very significant is not only what the key is, but where it is:*

*“What a fool I have been, to lie like this in a stinking dungeon, when I could have just as well walked free. In my chest pocket I have a key called Promise that will, I am thoroughly persuaded, open any lock in Doubting-Castle.”*

*“Then,” said Hopeful, “that is good news. My good brother, do immediately take it out of your chest pocket and try it.” Then Christian took the key from his chest and began to try the lock of the dungeon door; and as he turned the key, the bolt unlocked and the door flew open with ease, so that Christian and Hopeful immediately came out.*

*Three times Bunyan says that the key was in Christian’s “chest pocket” or simply his “chest.” I take this to mean that Christian had hidden it in his heart by memorization and that it was now accessible in prison for precisely this reason. This is how the promises sustained and strengthened Bunyan. He was filled with Scripture. Everything he wrote was saturated with Bible. He poured over his English Bible, which he had most of the time. This is why he can say of his writings, “I have not for these things fished in other men’s waters; my Bible and Concordance are my only library in my writings.”<sup>16</sup>*

Though Piper and Bunyan are not directly addressing what we will learn in this lesson, notice that Bunyan’s only tools were his Bible *and his concordance!*

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Colossians 1:9-10 (“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”) or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. Again, you may ask for several students to volunteer to read the paraphrases they composed. Don’t miss the opportunity to discuss, at length, the important logical connection between verses 12 and 13! You may want to discuss the several ways in which these verses could relate and then explain why Paul related them in the way he did.

*Break (5 min)*

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16 John Piper, “To Live Upon God That is Invisible,” an online biography of John Bunyan at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

**Word Studies and Word-Study Fallacies (15 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 7. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” After introducing the study strategy, read through and explain the three common word-study fallacies introduced in the lesson. Have the students brainstorm examples of these fallacies that they have heard, and then discuss them as a class.

This section may take extra preparation on your part if you are not familiar with word-study fallacies. We would recommend reading D. A. Carson’s book if you have not already done so.

Certainly Bunyan knew Scripture well, but even this great man of God used a concordance when his memory failed. Bunyan is an example to us in more ways than one.

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ appreciate the value of using a concordance
- ▷ learn the basic skills of using a book, or an internet, concordance
- ▷ practice using a concordance to learn about biblical words or phrases



Lesson 7 teaches students to use concordances word studies.

The section on word-study fallacies might be the most difficult section in this course. We have included it simply because we want to guard students from being overly optimistic or naïve about what can be accomplished in a word study.

Word-study fallacies are very common in popular-level inductive Bible studies, many of which are based on a use of *Vine's Expository Dictionary* of words. It is our belief that even *Living by the Book* commits the illegitimate totality transfer fallacy in its discussion of the word “equip” on pages 238-239. Does our understanding of the pastor’s job increase as we learn about repairing fishing nets, setting broken bones, and outfitting a ship? It is highly doubtful that Paul intended his use of the word “equip” to connote these associations or to bring the word’s full range of meaning into Ephesians 4:12.

If you can bring any examples of word-study fallacies that you have encountered to the class, that would be a great addition to the course. Impress upon the students that simply noting a word’s full range of meaning is not the end-goal of doing a word study. And teach them to avoid discussions of Greek words such as, for example, “the Greek word used here for ‘stretch’ actually means to pull apart, elongate, expand to the breaking point, or test.” A bare list of synonyms or unrelated meanings of the word does nothing to advance our understanding of the text.

Here is an additional warning that supports what we’ve been trying to say in this lesson. It was written by Moisés Silva on pages 57-58 of the chapter “Let’s Be Logical,” in *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*:

*Students are often advised to check how a particular word is used throughout the Scriptures. Even Christians who have not learned the biblical languages can use certain concordances (as well as other tools) that are keyed to the Greek and Hebrew terms. In principle, the advice is sound, for such a method helps us to determine the “semantic range” of the word in question; that is, if we are aware of the possible uses of a word, we are in a better position to decide which specific use occurs in the passage or passages that we are studying.*

*The words italicized in the previous paragraph highlight the proper aim of such a word study. In practice, however, students often ignore that very aspect. What*

*happens, instead, is that the whole complex of meanings is injected into one passage. Usually, this takes place in a subtle way. Even a responsible commentator, hoping to shed light on a word, may inform the reader that the word in question is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. There will follow a list of those uses, including quotations of various passages, with the implication that all of them in some way contribute to the meaning of the word in the verse being analyzed.*

The two exercises on “antichrist” and “last days” were designed to spark the students’ interest in word studies. Since most students will have preconceptions of what this word and phrase mean, actually seeing the contexts in which they are used should demonstrate to the students the benefits of doing careful word studies. They should not assume that they know what biblical words mean.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Colossians 1:9-10 or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Word Studies and Word-Study Fallacies (15 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 7. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**How to Use a Concordance (10 min):** Read through the instructions on how to use a book concordance and how to use an internet concordance.

**Exercise 1: Concordance Work on “Antichrist” (10 min):** This first exercise, using the word “antichrist(s),” will demonstrate the importance of doing a biblical word study.

**Exercise 2: Concordance Work on “Last Days” (15 min):** Repeat the exercise, using the phrase “last days.”

**Closing (5 min):**



In this lesson we come to a study strategy that will be familiar to many already. Almost all courses on inductive Bible study incorporate word studies or instructions for using a concordance.

There is strong theological warrant for doing word studies. This course espouses a view of *plenary inspiration*—that every word written in Scripture is precisely the word God intended to use. This means that not a single word in Scripture is accidental. Though every word choice may not be equally significant, nevertheless this doctrine of plenary inspiration gives us great confidence that studying the particular words of Scripture is a meaningful exercise. In this lesson, then we will learn how to do beneficial word studies.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.

Unfortunately, in our opinion, many of the courses or Bible studies that incorporate word studies do so in an unhelpful way. The reason is that not many have a good grasp on semantics and the proper use of language.

It is not within the scope of this lesson to outline all the problems to avoid in doing a word study. We do, however, want to introduce you to what may be the three most common word-study fallacies, as described by D. A. Carson.

For those who are interested in learning more, we strongly recommend the book *Exegetical Fallacies*, which is listed in the Additional Resources section of this lesson.

## 🌀 THE ROOT FALLACY

“One of the most enduring of errors, the root fallacy presupposes that every word actually *has* a meaning bound up with its shape or its components. In this view, meaning is determined by etymology; that is, by the root or roots of a word.”

A modern, English example of this fallacy is the attempt to derive “the meaning of ‘butterfly’ from ‘butter’ and ‘fly,’ or the meaning of ‘pineapple’ from ‘pine’ and ‘apple.’ Even those of us who have never been to Hawaii recognize that pineapples are not a special kind of apple that grows on pines.”

## 🌀 FALSE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TECHNICAL MEANING

“In this fallacy, an interpreter falsely assumes that a word always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning—a meaning usually derived either from a subset of the evidence or from the interpreter’s personal systematic theology. An easy example is the word *sanctification*. In most conservative theological discussion, sanctification is the progressive purifying of the believer, the process by which he becomes increasingly holy after an instantaneous ‘positional’ or ‘forensic’ justification. But it is a commonplace among Pauline scholars that although the term *sanctification* can have that force, it commonly refers to the initial setting aside of an individual for God at his conversion.”

See Teaching Notes for a helpful quote regarding the Illegitimate Totality Transfer fallacy.

## 🌀 ILLEGITIMATE TOTALITY TRANSFER

“The fallacy in this instance lies in the supposition that the meaning of a word in a specific context is much broader than the context itself allows and may bring with it the word’s entire semantic range.”<sup>17</sup>

In other words, this is the fallacy of bringing all the possible meanings of a word to bear on one particular context.

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<sup>17</sup> All of the citations in this section are taken from D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1996). The page numbers of the citations are, respectively, 28, 30, 45, and 60.



1. As you consider each of these fallacies, can you think of any examples you've encountered? Record them below before discussing them with the class.

- **ANSWER:** *Answers to this question will vary. Concentrate on identifying and discussing legitimate word-study fallacies. A common example of the root fallacy is misguided discussion of the word for "church" in the Greek: ekklēsia. Be suspicious of any discussion of this word which starts with "ekklēsia literally means 'the called-out ones.'" False assumptions about technical meaning often occur with the word "saved." Though this word does often denote eternal, spiritual salvation, it would be a mistake to read this meaning into every context (cf. Matthew 14:30, Acts 27:43, Jude 1:5). As far as illegitimate totality transfer, this fallacy is implied in many Bible studies which require a student to write out all the possible meanings for a word in the course of study, as though all of those meanings somehow enrich one's understanding of how the word is being used in a single context.*

## 🔗 HOW TO USE A CONCORDANCE

Having cautioned about some of the mistakes that can easily be made in doing a word study, let us reaffirm that doing word studies are profitable. The best way of doing a word study is to use a concordance. There are now two kinds of concordances that are widely available.

### *Book Concordance:*

Many study Bibles have an abbreviated concordance toward the end, but using a book concordance is just as easy. To find the word you are studying, simply search for it in its alphabetical order (just like a dictionary). Once you locate the word, there will be a number of biblical entries underneath that word, indicating some, if not all, of the occurrences of that word in the biblical text. Sometimes concordances inform you of the underlying Greek or Hebrew word (usually using Strong's numbers). You may then be able to study the meaning of that Greek or Hebrew word. But avoid making word fallacies! See D. A. Carson's book *Exegetical Fallacies* (listed in Additional Resources section), for a helpful discussion of common word fallacies.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> BibleArc.com is an excellent online resource for word studies, as well as learning more about study techniques like diagramming, phrasing, and arcing. As of May 17, 2016, a video tutorial for English word studies is available in the Help section.

**Exercise 1: Concordance Work on “Antichrist” (10 min):** This first exercise, using the word “antichrist(s),” will demonstrate the importance of doing a biblical word study. To introduce this Exercise you might first ask the students where they think that the word “antichrist” appears in the Bible (without looking at the answers, of course). Most students will probably say Revelation, although the word never appears in that book. Read the instructions and allow the students to attempt this exercise for about 4 minutes. Then facilitate discussion for about 6 minutes, especially focusing on what misconceptions this word study may have cleared away.

## 🔗 EXERCISE 1: CONCORDANCE WORK ON “ANTICHRIST”

We will now attempt a small-scale word study on the word “antichrist.” Before we study this word, think about what preconceptions you have about its meaning. What do you think it means? Where would you guess that this word occurs in the Bible?

2. Use your Bibles to look up all the occurrences of this word, listed below. Record any observations on what this word means in each context and then summarize your findings.

*Notes on 1 John 2:18 (2x)* ANSWER:

- ▷ Are there many antichrists who represent one (future) antichrist?
- ▷ Originally they were part of John’s community.
- ▷ Their presence signals that it is the last hour.

*1 John 2:22* ANSWER:

- ▷ Specifically, antichrists deny Jesus Christ (and thereby deny the Father).
- ▷ Unbelievers are probably not all antichrists; rather, false teachers are (see 2:26).
- ▷ Antichrists try to deceive the church.

*1 John 4:3* ANSWER:

- ▷ Antichrists have a spirit that denies that Jesus is from God.
- ▷ Antichrists are already in the world.
- ▷ John’s audience was expecting the antichrist(s) in the future.

*2 John 1:7* ANSWER:

- ▷ Antichrists were deceivers who targeted the church.
- ▷ Their specific heresy was to deny the coming of Jesus in the flesh.
- ▷ Antichrists were active in the first century.

*Summary* ANSWER:

- ▷ The term is only used in John’s letters. It refers to a future individual (and his present representatives) who spreads a specific Christological heresy.

## 🔗 EXERCISE 2: CONCORDANCE WORK ON “LAST DAYS”

We will now examine the phrase “last days.” Again, what preconceptions do you have about the meaning of this phrase?

3. Use your Bibles to look up all the occurrences of the phrase “last days.” Record any observations on what this word means in each context and then summarize your findings.

*Notes on Acts 2:17* ANSWER:

- ▷ A time reference in the prophecies of Joel.
- ▷ They are identified with the pouring out of the Spirit.
- ▷ Peter argues that the last days have come at Pentecost.

*2 Timothy 3:1* ANSWER:

- ▷ The last days are associated with sin and difficulty.
- ▷ The last days are a present reality in the first century (see 3:5).

*Hebrews 1:2* ANSWER:

- ▷ The last days are distinguished from God’s work before Jesus.
- ▷ The last days seem to be an ongoing reality—we are living in them.
- ▷ Heightened revelation marks the last days.

*James 5:3* ANSWER:

- ▷ The rich people James is addressing live in the last days.
- ▷ Do the last days end with the coming of the Lord?
- ▷ What we do in the last days will be judged, soon (see 5:9).

*2 Peter 3:3* ANSWER:

- ▷ It is unclear whether the last days are a present reality from this text.
- ▷ But why would Peter remind them (3:1-3) if it weren’t a present reality?
- ▷ The last days are associated with scoffing and sin. But they will end.

*Summary* ANSWER:

- ▷ The phrase “last days” is used by a number of biblical authors. It consistently refers to the period of time beginning with Jesus’ incarnation and ministry and extending to God’s final judgment. Therefore, it is biblically correct to say that we are living in the period of the last days *now*. The last days are characterized by heightened revelation and sin.

**Exercise 2: Concordance Work on “Last Days” (15 min):** Repeat the exercise, using the phrase “last days.” Again, before the students see the list of occurrences, you might first ask them where they think that the phrase “last days” appears in the Bible or what they think it means. Repeating this exercise will provide additional preparation for the next homework assignment. Read the instructions and allow the students to attempt this exercise for about 6 minutes. Then facilitate discussion for about 9 minutes.



## § HOMEWORK

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 7. Ensure that the students understand the Bible memorization component. Remind them that they will be held accountable for memorizing their verse at the beginning of the next class session. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.

**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 2:19-30. Using a concordance, find every occurrence of the phrase “fellow worker(s).” This phrase occurs in Philippians 2:25 and the goal of our concordance work will be a better understanding of what it means in this verse. List the other references you find in the left-hand column of the assignment sheet.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 2 to memorize that is personally significant.

**Day 2** Focus on the first half of the references for the phrase “fellow worker(s),” reading the surrounding context for each. Record your observations. Here are a few questions that might focus your study: 1) Can this phrase refer to men and women? 2) Does this phrase refer specifically to leaders? 3) Does this phrase occur frequently with other particular words or phrases? 4) In what contexts does this word occur?

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 2 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 32

**Day 3** Focus on the second half of the references. Record observations about what this phrase means in each context.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 35

**Day 4** Write a summary of how the phrase “fellow worker(s)” is used in the New Testament. How does this word study contribute to your understanding of Philippians 2:25?

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

**Day 5** Discern the main point of Philippians 2:19-30 and write it down.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.



## § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. How might the doctrine of inspiration motivate your completion of word studies?
2. Could your life serve as a model for others as Epaphroditus' life did?
3. Your own reflections:

## § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
- ▷ John Piper, "The Good, Insane Concordance Maker," an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, "Gravity and Gladness on Sunday Morning, Part 1a," seminar notes at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, "Biblical Eldership, Part 1a," seminar notes at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).



**Concordance Work on “Fellow Worker(s)” in the New Testament**

Reference	Observations
Rom 16:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to a man and woman</i></li> <li>• <i>they were house church leaders (Rom 16:5; cf. 1 Cor 16:19)</i></li> <li>• <i>phrase occurs in the context of greetings</i></li> </ul>
Rom 16:9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>phrase occurs between occurrences of “beloved”</i></li> </ul>
Rom 16:21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Timothy (who definitely was a leader and teacher)</i></li> </ul>
1 Cor 3:9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Paul and Apollos as fellow workers of God</i></li> <li>• <i>they were distinguished from the church at large</i></li> </ul>
1 Cor 16:16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to those leaders to whom the church should be subject used in conjunction with the term “laborer”</i></li> </ul>
2 Cor 8:23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Titus (who definitely was a leader and teacher)</i></li> </ul>
Col 4:11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus in Paul’s band of fellow workers (these were all from the “circumcision”)</i></li> <li>• <i>worked for the kingdom of God; encouraged Paul</i></li> </ul>
Phm 1:1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Philemon (who was a house church leader)</i></li> </ul>
Phm 1:24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke</i></li> </ul>
3 John 1:8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to financial supporters of missionaries (non-Pauline) usage</i></li> </ul>
Phil 2:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Epaphroditus (who is also called Paul’s brother, fellow soldier, messenger, and minister)</i></li> </ul>
Phil 4:3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>refers to Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, and others who have “labored side by side” with Paul</i></li> </ul>

## Written Summary

- **ANSWER:** *Paul does not use the term “fellow worker” to refer to Christians in general; he reserves the term for those who, in a focused way, labor with him for the kingdom of God. The term often is used to describe house church leaders or those within Paul’s apostolic band. Paul exhorts believers to submit themselves to these leaders. But it is unlikely that the term refers to a specific office within the church and Paul includes both men and women in this category. Therefore, we should probably view Epaphroditus as more than a messenger; he is probably some kind of leader in the Philippian church. Likewise, Euodia and Syntyche were probably leaders of some kind with whom Paul had previously worked, which perhaps explains why Paul addresses them specifically.*

## Main Point of Philippians 2:19-30

- **ANSWER:** *Paul is sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippians, both of whom are worthy role models, especially because they are self-sacrificing, humble servants.*



# The Blessing of Different Translations

# 8

## 🔗 INTRODUCTION

Many parts of the world have a *single* translation of the Bible in their language. Some parts of the world have no Bible, but in America, there is no lack of English translations. This is a blessing. The church in America would be impoverished if everyone used the same translation of the Bible or if no new translations were ever made.

That being said, not all translations are equally fit for the various things for which Bibles are used. For example, it would probably be unwise to encourage your six-year-old daughter to read the *King James Version* of the Bible. But likewise, it would be foolish to do serious Bible study in *The Message*. In fact, particularly for study, it is best to use a variety of translations, if possible. This allows the reader to spot the different decisions that the translations have made, because *every translation is also an interpretation* of the original languages. So rather than the multiplicity of translations causing confusion or despair, the multiple English translations of the Bible should give us new insights and questions, and sharpen our understanding of the Word of God.

## 🔗 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the value of studying various translations
- grasp a brief history of the English Bible and basic translation philosophy
- compare different translations and thereby form new observations and questions

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Psalm 25:4-5 (“Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.”) or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):** Instruct the class to gather into groups of two to four. Ask the students to recite the memory verse that they chose to the other members of their group. Instruct the students to share *why* they chose that particular verse to memorize. If you have a smaller class, recitation can be done without breaking into smaller groups.

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment. After you review the students’ observations on each of the occurrences of “fellow worker(s)” and then the student summaries, ask them what they learned through this word study. Were there any other words in this passage that the students would like to examine?



*Break (5 min)*

**English Translations (10 min):**

Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 8. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” To save time, you may choose to start discussing student responses to Question 1 immediately instead of allowing them to first process the question on their own.

At this point, it would be helpful for you to commend the value of learning the original languages.

Those who are able to learn the original languages will undoubtedly find them valuable for their study of the Word of God. We consider a mastery of the original languages to be indispensable for those who regularly preach. There are several ways to learn languages online, including Biblemesh.org. If you have students who are interested, online courses may be the best available option.

Lesson 8 discusses Bible translations — the history and philosophy of various Bible translations, and the benefits of comparing them. How you present the translation issues in this lesson is at your discretion. A lot of flexibility is built into the teaching outline. Use an approach that would be most beneficial to your particular class.

🔗 **OUTLINE**

**Prayer (5 min):** Use Psalm 25:4-5 or another verse of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):**

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**English Translations (10 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 8. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Exercise 1: A Brief History of English Bible Translations (15 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow the students a few minutes to attempt it on their own.

**Exercise 2: Translation Philosophy (10 min):**

Here are descriptions of the translation philosophy for three popular versions of the Bible, as described by their own websites:

**English Standard Version (ESV):** “The ESV is an ‘essentially literal’ translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on ‘word-for-word’ correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be **transparent to the original text**, letting the reader see as directly as possible the

structure and meaning of the original.” (Excerpt taken from <http://www.esv.org/translation/philosophy>, accessed August 10, 2007.)

**New American Standard (NASB):** “Since its completion in 1971, the *New American Standard Bible* has been widely acclaimed as ‘the most literally accurate translation’ from the original languages. Millions of people, students, scholars, pastors, missionaries, and laypersons alike, have trusted the *NASB*, learning from it and applying it to the challenges of their daily lives. With the *NASB*, anyone can discover what the original text really says, word for word, because it is considered the most literal translation of the Bible in the English language, consistently following the oldest and best manuscripts.

The updated *NASB* continues this commitment to accuracy, while increasing clarity and readability. Vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure have been carefully updated for greater understanding and smoother reading. The updated *NASB* remains the most literally accurate Bible in the English language.” (Excerpt taken from <http://www.lockman.org/nasb/>, accessed August 10, 2007.)

**New International Version (NIV):** “From the beginning of the project, the Committee on Bible Translation held to certain goals for the *New International Version*: that it would be an accurate translation and one that would have clarity and literary quality and so prove suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. The Committee also sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English.

...The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers. They have weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. At the same time, they have striven for more than a word-for-word translation. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modifications in sentence structures and constant regard for the contextual meaning of words.

...Concern for clear and natural English—that the *New International Version* should be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated—motivated the translators and consultants. At the same time, they tried to reflect the differing styles of the biblical writer.” (Excerpts taken from <http://www.ibs.org/niv/background.php>.)

We don't want to unnecessarily discourage those who can only read English translations, or plant any seeds of doubt in their mind about the reliability of English translations. Try to avoid creating distance between students and their English Bibles. It is your difficult task to walk the line between asserting the value of Greek and Hebrew while not eroding your students' confidence in their Bibles.

### Exercise 3: Translation Comparison (15 min):

#### Closing (5 min):



There are a number of English translations and paraphrases of the Bible. How should we think about this variety of translations?

Reproduced below you will find a smattering of comments that John Piper has made during his sermons in the last thirty years. Although most of these comments are not intended to directly address translation philosophy or reliability, hopefully it will give you an idea of the various ways in which one preacher has interacted with the English translations.

*“Almost all English translations miss a beautiful opportunity to preserve in English a play on words that occurs in Paul’s Greek.”<sup>19</sup>*

*“The translations of vv. 19 and 20 differ. The most modern translation, I think, misses the boat when they begin v. 20 with ‘whenever.’”<sup>20</sup>*

*“I know that the translations differ here a little bit. But I don’t think the differences are serious. ...All these are possible from the Greek wording. And they are not in the end very different.”<sup>21</sup>*

*“To bring together all the various translations that are out there, let me give you a literal rendering of this verse so you can see more clearly the relationship between the words.”<sup>22</sup>*

*“In fact, I am not sure the translations are exactly right in the word order. Word order in Greek is usually not decisive in what modifies what. But if a modifier can go both ways, word order can be important.”<sup>23</sup>*

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19 John Piper, “Grace, Gratitude, and the Glory of God,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

20 John Piper, “If Our Hearts Do Not Condemn Us, We Have Confidence Before God,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

21 John Piper, “All Things for Good, Part 1,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

22 John Piper, “Girding the Mind to Guard Your Hope,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

23 John Piper, “Thank God for an Inspired Bible,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

*“The second reason is given in verse 2: Don’t eat the bread of anxious toil because ‘God gives to his beloved in his sleep.’ Some translations say, ‘He gives his beloved sleep.’ Either is a possible translation from the Hebrew. One implies that God helps a person rest at night, the other implies that while a person is resting God is busily at work in the world to bless him. Which fits the context better?”<sup>24</sup>*

*“Many translations will obscure this, but not the best ones.”<sup>25</sup>*

*“Some translations say ‘by Jesus Christ.’ Some say, ‘for Jesus Christ.’ The original Greek can mean the one as easily as the other. Both are probably true in Jude’s mind. But let me show you why the NASB chose to say ‘for Jesus Christ.’”<sup>26</sup>*

1. In your mind, what can be learned about the English translations of the Bible from this sampling of comments? How should we approach English translations?

· **ANSWER:** *A few things could be drawn from these comments. First, knowing Greek and Hebrew is certainly an advantage in biblical interpretation. An understanding of the original languages allows the interpreter to see exactly what decisions are being made in translation. Second, many translation issues cannot be resolved by an understanding of the grammar alone. The context and theology influences translation decisions. Third, it is possible that at points none of the translations give the best rendering of the text. Please note, however, that of the hundreds of sermons that John Piper has preached, he comments on translations in relatively few. So students of the English Bible should feel confident that the English translations we have are sufficient for understanding God’s Word.*

*“I praise God that we have the Bible in English. What a gift! What a treasure! We cannot begin to estimate what this is worth to Christians and churches, and even to the unbelievers and the cultures of the English-speaking world. Ten thousand benefits flow from the influence of this book that we are not even aware of. And the preaching of this Word in tens of thousands of pulpits across America is more important than every media outlet in the nation.*

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24 John Piper, “Don’t Eat the Bread of Anxious Toil,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

25 John Piper, “Jesus Christ: Infinitely Superior to Angels,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

26 John Piper, “Learning to Pray in the Spirit and the Word, Part 1,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

*I would rather have people read any translation of the Bible—no matter how weak—than to read no translation of the Bible. If there could be only one translation in English, I would rather it be my least favorite than that there be none. God uses every version to bless people and save people.*

*But the issue before the church in the English-speaking world today is not “no translation vs. a weak translation.” It is between many precious English Bibles. A Bible does not cease to be precious and powerful because its translators overuse paraphrase and put way too much of their own interpretation into the Bible. That’s the way God’s Word is! It breaks free from poor translations and poor preaching—for which I am very thankful. But even though the weakest translation is precious, and is used by God to save and strengthen sinful people, better translations would be a great blessing to the church and an honor to Christ.”<sup>27</sup>*

### Exercise 1: A Brief History of English Bible Translations

**(15 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow the students a few minutes to attempt it on their own. When you review the answers as a class, we recommend that you proceed in chronological order. To prepare for this discussion, you may want to read the articles by Daniel B. Wallace on Bible.org entitled “The History of the English Bible,” or the booklet entitled *Choosing a Bible: Understanding Bible Translation Differences*, by Leland Ryken (Crossway, 2005). For more extensive research, we recommend Fee, Gordon D., and Mark L. Strauss. *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

### 🔗 EXERCISE 1: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

In this lesson we will present a brief overview of translation philosophy, including some comments about the most popular contemporary translations. To put the matter in perspective, though, we will first present a brief overview of the history of the English Bible.

2. Complete this matching assignment by assigning each name or title a corresponding description and date. Write both appropriate letters to the left of each name or title.

*Name or Title:*

<u>  D O  </u>	1. English Revised Version
<u>  F K  </u>	2. William Tyndale
<u>  C I  </u>	3. John Wycliffe
<u>  E P  </u>	4. New International Version
<u>  H J  </u>	5. Johann Gutenberg
<u>  B M  </u>	6. The Geneva Bible
<u>  A N  </u>	7. The King James Bible
<u>  G L  </u>	8. Myles Coverdale

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<sup>27</sup> John Piper, “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

*Description:*

- A. became the dominant English Bible for three hundred years
- B. the first Bible to include chapter and verse numbers
- C. wrote the first English translation of the Bible
- D. the first Bible to exclude the Apocrypha (intertestamental books)
- E. the best-selling modern English translation of the Bible
- F. printed the first English New Testament and was later martyred for it
- G. printed the first complete Bible in the English language
- H. his invention of the printing press allowed the Bible to be mass-produced

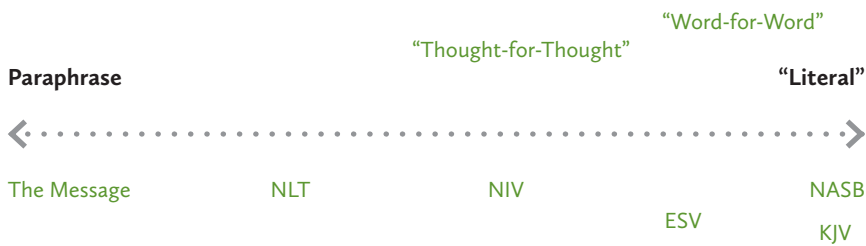
*Date:*

- I. 1380s
- J. 1450s
- K. 1526
- L. 1535
- M. 1560
- N. 1611
- O. 1880s
- P. 1973

**EXERCISE 2: TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHY**

Now that we have a little background, we will take a look at basic translation philosophy.

- 3. Fill in the following spectrum as your teacher provides the information:



**Exercise 2: Translation Philosophy**

**(10 min):** For this exercise, we recommend that you reproduce the simple diagram contained in the *Student's Workbook* on a chalkboard, whiteboard, or screen. Then you could fill the diagram with the information presented in this *Instructor's Guide*, making comments on each translation. It would be helpful to inform your students which translation of the Bible your church uses and why. If you want to add other Bible translations to the spectrum, or present the material in your own way, please do so. See Teaching Notes for descriptions of the translation philosophy for the ESV, NIV, and NASB.

**Exercise 3: Translation Comparison (15 min):** Introduce the study strategy and read the instructions for this exercise.

After allowing the students about 5 minutes to compare the translations, discuss the results of this exercise for about 10 minutes. Stress to the students what can and cannot be accomplished by comparing translations. Inform your students that for future translation comparisons they may go to BibleArc.com or BibleGateway.com.

**EXERCISE 3: TRANSLATION COMPARISON**

The two previous exercises have been building toward our eighth study strategy. How can we turn the multiplicity of English translations into a blessing? Knowing that each translation (to different degrees) is also an interpretation of the original languages, we can thoughtfully compare translations in our inductive study of the Bible. Comparing different translations will help us make observations and ask questions, will sometimes make the logic of a passage more explicit, and will prompt us to examine particular words.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.

4. Compare the following translations of Philippians 3:7-8 by underlining, circling, or otherwise marking similarities and differences between the translations. If you have a set of colored pens or pencils, they will come in handy for translation comparisons.

**English Standard Version (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...



### **New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ...

### **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ

### **The Message (a paraphrase)**

<sup>7</sup> The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ

### **New Living Translation (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. <sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

### **King James Version (KJV)**

<sup>7</sup> But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ...

5. After comparing these different translations, what do you now know (or appreciate) that would not have been possible to know by reading a single translation? What new questions do you have? Record your reflections below.

· **ANSWER:** *Answers will vary. The various translations may alert us to the following questions, which may not have been prompted otherwise: 1) Is the past tense of “consider” significant? 2) What precisely is the relationship between “I count everything as loss” and “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ?” 3) Is the translation “rubbish” not strong enough?*



**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 3:1-16. Read this passage repeatedly. Record your observations and questions.

**Day 2** Do a translation comparison and analysis on Philippians 3:2-4a using the provided worksheet. Underline, circle, or otherwise mark similarities and differences between the translations. If you have a variety of colored pencils, pens, or highlighters, this might be preferable. Record your observations.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 7

**Day 3** Do a translation comparison and analysis on Philippians 3:4b-6 using the provided worksheet. What are the striking similarities and differences?

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 13

**Day 4** Review the translation comparison you've completed. What observations and questions has your translation comparison prompted that might not have been prompted by reading a single translation alone?

**Day 5** Discern the main point of Philippians 3:1-16 and write it down.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled "Homework" in Lesson 8. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



## § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Which Bible translation do you prefer? Why? How do you feel about the other translations?
2. What things might you need to count as loss for the sake of knowing Christ?
3. Your own reflections:

## § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▷ John Piper, “Always Singing One Note—A Vernacular Bible,” an online biography of William Tyndale at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV,” an online article at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ John Piper, “Exodus 21:22-25 and Abortion,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).
- ▷ Brunn, Dave. *One Bible, Many Versions: Are All Translations Created Equal?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- ▷ Köstenberger, Andreas J. and David A. Croteau. *Which Bible Translation Should I Use?: A Comparison of 4 Major Recent Versions*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012.



**English Standard Version (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law, blameless.

**New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—  
<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness, based on the law, faultless.

**New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; <sup>3</sup> for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

### **The Message (a paraphrase)**

<sup>2</sup> Steer clear of the barking dogs, those religious busybodies, all bark and no bite. All they're interested in is appearances—knife-happy circumcisers, I call them. <sup>3</sup> The real believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ's praise as we do it. We couldn't carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it—<sup>4</sup> even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials. You know my pedigree: <sup>5</sup> a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day; an Israelite from the elite tribe of Benjamin; a strict and devout adherent to God's law; <sup>6</sup> a fiery defender of the purity of my religion, even to the point of persecuting the church; a meticulous observer of everything set down in God's law Book.

### **New Living Translation (NLT)**

<sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil and their evil deeds, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. <sup>3</sup> For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the only ones who are truly circumcised. We put no confidence in my own effort. We rely on what Christ has done for us. <sup>4</sup> Though I could have confidence in myself if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! <sup>5</sup> I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and member of the tribe of Benjamin – a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. <sup>6</sup> I was so jealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

### **King James Version (KJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. <sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. <sup>4</sup> Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: <sup>5</sup> Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.



### Translation Comparison on Philippians 3:2-6

ANSWER:

*Points for discussion:*

- ▷ *Are the three groups of people, mentioned in v. 8, one and the same? The more literal translations are ambiguous (ESV, NASB, KJV); the others interpret them as the same group (NIV, Message, NLT).*
- ▷ *Who is the third group mentioned? Is the NLT interpretation (“those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved”) accurate?*
- ▷ *Is something lost by translating “flesh” as “human effort” (v. 3)?*
- ▷ *In v. 4, should that little word be translated by “also” (ESV, KJV) or “even” (NASB)? Does it make a difference? Is anything lost by leaving it out (NIV, Message, NLT)?*
- ▷ *Does the Message and the NLT accurately paraphrase the sense of v. 5? Is this helpful for most readers?*
- ▷ *The end of v. 6 is full of problems. Is the NIV’s insertion of “legalistic” before “righteousness” justified? Why does the ESV put the phrase “under the law” with “blameless” instead of “righteousness”? Is there a difference between being “blameless” and “faultless” in your mind? Is Paul claiming that he never sinned under the law? If not, what is he claiming? Is Paul claiming that along the Pharisaic lines of interpretation of the law, his record is without blemish—that is, that he was a Pharisee in good standing?*

*Again, use this discussion to stress the value of studying the original languages: knowing Greek will more directly alert you to the decisions that each translation makes. But balance this with the fact that the basic message of this passage comes across clearly in all six translations. In other words, you don’t want to create distance between your students and their English Bibles (e.g., “I can’t understand the meaning of this passage without knowing Greek”) and yet, you should hold out the value of learning Greek. This is a difficult, but important, balance to strike. Knowledge of Greek should never be used in a way that shuts down discussion.*

### **Main Point of Philippians 3:1-16**

- **ANSWER:** *Paul encourages the Philippians to boast only in the Lord Jesus Christ and the righteousness that comes through him. Gaining Christ entails the loss of all other things and a lifelong pursuit of him.*



# Prophecies, Parables, Proverbs— Oh My!

# 9

## § INTRODUCTION

The Bible has a dizzying array of genres. Prophecies, parables, and proverbs meet chronologies, battle accounts, and historical narratives. Detailed instructions for the construction of the tabernacle give way to vivid and poetic descriptions of human love. The Bible, in all its genres, simply *cannot* be read as a flat, uniform whole. Rather, sensitivity to the variety of biblical genres gives our reading a depth and texture not otherwise possible. Literary interpretation recognizes the difficulty of this task and provides “rules” that can help us navigate through the bewildering collection of materials that have been artfully stitched together into a single, unified book.

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- understand the necessity of literary interpretation
- gain a basic familiarity with some of the major biblical genres
- practice identifying the characteristics of these various genres

**Prayer (5 minutes):** A verse that you may use to direct this opening time of prayer is 1 Corinthians 2:14, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” See Teaching Notes for quotes to help prepare for prayer.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. Concentrate discussion on identifying how translation comparison allowed the students to make observations and ask questions that may not have been prompted by looking at a single translation.

*Break (5 min)*



## TEACHING NOTES

### Literary Interpretation (5 min):

Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 9. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” Introduce the principle of literary interpretation. Again, it must be clear that this course is not designed to be a comprehensive introduction to the various genres of the Bible. Rather, students will gain a minimal exposure to this vast field of study. Our aim is to create another category for interpretation within students’ minds. We aim to put literary interpretation “on the radar screen” for students. We also intend to point students to additional resources that deal with this topic more thoroughly.

Perhaps as the instructor of the course you will recognize our dilemma in introducing the biblical genres and literary interpretation. Certainly this topic is too important to go without mention. On the other hand, two lessons (this one and the next) can hardly do justice to the topic. So again, please understand that as with many topics in the course, literary interpretation will only receive the briefest overview.

One genre that is notably absent from the list of eight is the genre of apocalyptic literature. Although it has some overlap with prophetic literature, it does deserve attention in and of itself. Here are two proposed descriptions of this genre:

*McCartney and Clayton, Let the Reader Understand, 226: “We will define apocalyptic as that literary genre which interprets earthly events, especially the struggles of God’s people, as manifestations of the heavenly warfare between God and the forces of evil, and depicts the coming ultimate victory of God over those forces by means of highly symbolic images.”*

*Klein et. al., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 311: “Apocalyptic describes prophecies in which God ‘reveals’ his hidden future plans, usually through dreams or visions with elaborate and at times strange symbolism or numbers.”*

Whether you want to discuss apocalyptic literature or other biblical genres is a decision you can make. As your students grow in their understanding of biblical literature they will realize that the categories we’ve isolated in this lesson are gross simplifications. But a beginner must start somewhere.

As far as the secondary literature listed in this lesson and the next, please be aware that *Bethlehem College & Seminary* is not necessarily in full agreement with the perspective offered in these books. For example, though it is an excellent book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* leans towards egalitarianism. Therefore, as always, urge your students to use discernment as they read the secondary literature.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** One of the issues that receives little treatment in this course is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and biblical interpretation. This is how Bethlehem’s *Affirmation of Faith* puts the matter:

1.4 Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible (which is its fullest meaning) is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure Biblical texts. Therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible, and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word.

Here are Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.'s reflections on this verse and Bible study, as cited from *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 168. Notice the linking of the Holy Spirit and careful study:

*And 1 Corinthians 2:14 adds the thought that, without the indwelling ministry and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit, such persons will neither welcome nor embrace the realities found in the biblical text. Thus, one of the unique roles of the Holy Spirit is to convict, convince, and arouse sluggish hearts by applying the truths perceived in the text of Scripture to the lives of individuals. As a further aid to placing oneself in a position where the ministry of the Holy Spirit can work more effectively, Scripture calls upon the reader to ponder and meditate carefully on what is being said in the biblical text.*

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment

*Break (5 min)*

**Literary Interpretation (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 9. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Exercise 1: Introducing the Biblical Genres (20 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow the students a few minutes to attempt it on their own.

**Exercise 2: Name That Biblical Genre (20 min):**

**Variations on a Theme (5 min):** Introduce your students to the ninth study strategy, which they will practice in the homework assignment.

**Closing (5 min):**



This course focuses on Philippians, which is an epistle of the New Testament. In some ways, New Testament epistles are the easiest place to begin inductive study. But once you complete this course and want to venture into other parts of the Bible, you will need to learn how to interpret other genres. This lesson and the next lesson start to build the foundation for such an endeavor, but don't despair! The many skills we've learned in studying Philippians can be applied to *any* genre of the Bible. And as always, a careful, patient, humble reading of the text is the most vital element in reading any genre.

Here is the third and final principle for sound interpretation. Remember that these three principles should be kept in mind throughout the inductive process.

### Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.
3. **Literary Interpretation:** The Bible is a collection of many different literary genres, each with its own "rules" of interpretation. Learn these rules and interpret carefully.

Since this an introductory course, we will not have nearly enough time to adequately cover the various genres and the interpretative approach that each genre demands. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you consult the Additional Resources listed at the end of this lesson and the next as you engage in further study. These resources will develop your ability to read the biblical genres with literary sensitivity.

This lesson will attempt to describe some of the biblical genres and give you some brief practice in identifying the various genres. In other words, this lesson aims to form what may be called "literary competence" at a very basic level:

“Specifically, literary tools help Bible readers to develop what John Barton calls literary competence. Each kind of literature has its own frame of reference, ground rules, strategy, and purpose. Literary competence is the ability to discern cues within the text that indicate what kind of literature we are working with and, hence, what to expect or not to expect from it. The Bible student who knows the formation and function of each literary type is in the best position to interpret correctly and to avoid serious misunderstandings.”<sup>28</sup>

## 🔗 EXERCISE 1: INTRODUCING THE BIBLICAL GENRES

As the above quotation suggests, the first step in literary competence is to be able to discern “what kind of literature we are working with.” Therefore, the following exercise is intended to outline eight major genres within the Bible. There are doubtless many “sub-genres” within each major genre, and some of the genres below occur within each other (e.g., parables occurring within Gospels). As you gain more biblical, literary competence, these categories will be refined.

1. Complete this matching assignment by assigning each genre a corresponding description. Write the appropriate letters to the left of each genre.

	<i>Genre</i>
<u>G</u>	1. Historical Narrative
<u>D</u>	2. Law
<u>F</u>	3. Prophecy
<u>H</u>	4. Poetry
<u>A</u>	5. Proverbs
<u>B</u>	6. Gospels
<u>C</u>	7. Parables
<u>E</u>	8. Epistles

### *Description:*

- A. brief, memorable statements that portray practical truth
- B. a genre combining biography and teaching within a theological agenda
- C. simple, illustrative stories that call for a response from the hearers
- D. commands that define how God’s people are to act within the covenant
- E. occasional letters that were intended to be read publicly

**Exercise 1: Introducing the Biblical Genres (20 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise and then allow the students a few minutes to attempt it on their own. Once the students’ preliminary understanding has been measured, guide them through the eight genres that are listed in the exercise. Read the cited material. For each genre, feel free to add your own comments and field student questions. You may choose to have students to brainstorm a list of biblical books or passages that contain the various genres surveyed.

<sup>28</sup> William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1993), 260.

- F. oracles proclaiming God’s word and calling for obedience (not merely foretelling)
- G. portions of Scripture that depict characters involved in a series of events
- H. figurative or imaginative writing in a stylized, and often parallel, structure

Once you have completed this matching exercise, your instructor will briefly lead you through a number of descriptions of these genres, as cited from some of the secondary literature listed in the Additional Resources section.

#### *Historical Narrative*

Narrative is the most common genre in the Bible. Identifying narrative is fairly straightforward and shouldn’t pose too many problems.

*“Narrative in its broadest sense is an account of specific space-time events and participants whose stories are recorded with a beginning, a middle, and an end.”<sup>29</sup>*

#### *Law*

The term “Law” can refer to the Mosaic Law or even the first five books of the Bible. This lesson will treat ‘law’ as a literary genre that includes divine commands and the accompanying blessings and curses.

*“By ‘law’ the English Bible reader understands the legal rulings and moral injunctions found within the Pentateuch.”<sup>30</sup>*

#### *Prophecy*

*“Prophecy is a much larger biblical genre than most people think. All too many connect the word prophecy with the idea of futurology. But the bulk of prophecy in both the earlier prophets, the latter prophets, and the New Testament prophets actually involved God’s messengers speaking the word of God to a contemporary culture that needed to be challenged to cease its resistance to the word of God. As such, these prophets were ‘forth-tellers.’”<sup>31</sup>*

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29 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Moses Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 69.

30 Gordon J. Wenham, “Law,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, eds. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et. al. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 442.

31 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 139.

As this excerpt indicates, the prophetic literature of the Bible does include pronouncements of future judgments or restoration, but includes much more than that too. Prophetic literature often builds upon God's law and God's covenant.

### *Poetry*

*“Ancient—and especially biblical—poetry is not a purely aesthetic object, but is indeed concerned with the communication of truth. So although we call it biblical ‘poetry’ because it is artistic and beautiful language, it is not deliberately ambiguous or mystical.*

*The distinguishing mark of poetry in the [Old Testament] is not primarily rhyme, alliteration, or meter (although these occur from time to time), but what is commonly called ‘parallelism.’ Parallelism occurs where two (or more) lines of approximately equal length in numbers of syllables and similar grammatical structure deal with the same subject. The second line advances a bit more information or a different depiction than the first line, either by addition, contrast, or specification.”<sup>32</sup>*

*“Poetry consists of written compositions typified by terseness, vivid words, and a high degree of structure. Put differently, poetry displays a higher degree of structure, sound, and language than prose.”<sup>33</sup>*

### *Proverbs*

Proverbs are usually associated with the broader category of wisdom literature. For the purposes of this lesson, we will consider proverbs as a separate genre.

*“Proverbs are brief sayings that are memorable, embody the wisdom of many, possess a fullness of meaning with a wide application, and have a bit of kick or bite to them to ensure their saltiness and continued usefulness.”<sup>34</sup>*

### *Gospels*

The first four books of the New Testament warrant their own literary category.

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32 Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994), 216.

33 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 216.

34 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 99.

*“[Gospels are] not biographies—although they are partly biographical. ... They are, to use the phrase of the second-century church father Justin Martyr, ‘the memoirs of the apostles.’ Four biographies could not stand side by side as of equal value; these books stand side by side because at one and the same time they record the facts about Jesus, recall the teaching of Jesus, and each bears witness to Jesus.”<sup>35</sup>*

### *Parables*

The parables of the Bible, and especially those found in the teaching of Christ, vary in form and function. Broadly considered, however, the following definition may suffice:

*“Most parables are stories or depictions of earthly life which both illustrate spiritual truth and provoke a response to it.”<sup>36</sup>*

### *Epistles*

The book of Philippians would be categorized in this final genre we are to consider.

*“[Epistles] are all what are technically called occasional documents (i.e., arising out of an intended for a specific occasion), and they are from the first century. Although inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus belonging to all time, they were first written out of the context of the author to the context of the original recipients.”<sup>37</sup>*

As a reader of Scripture, you are probably already aware of these various genres. It is the intention of this lesson to encourage you to think more deliberately about these genres and how the interpretive approach to each will be determined by the kind of genre.

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35 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.116 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

36 McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 221. Italics removed.

37 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.48 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)



## § EXERCISE 2: NAME THAT BIBLICAL GENRE

Having been briefly introduced to eight major genres within the Bible, we will now practice identifying each one by looking for clues within the text.

2. Each of the following biblical passages is given without reference information. By reading the passage carefully, decide what kind of biblical genre this passage represents. Record observations that support your decision.

### Passage #1

*But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.*

- **ANSWER:** *Prophecy (Ezekiel 38:18-23)*
  - Repeated reference to the future
  - Judgment language
  - Words directly from the Lord

### Passage #2

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not*

**Exercise 2: Name That Biblical Genre (20 min):** After reading the instructions, you may proceed through this exercise in one of two ways: 1) you could allow students to examine each passage separately, pausing to discuss their ideas before moving to the next passage; or 2) you could allow your students to look over all eight passages before facilitating discussion. Most of your students will probably be easily able to identify the genre of each passage. Therefore, during discussion focus on the "cues" that alert the reader to the genre. You may want to give the students an opportunity to guess the reference of the passage before disclosing it.

*in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.*

- **ANSWER:** Epistles (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6)
  - ▷ Personal in tone
  - ▷ Tight argumentation
  - ▷ Exhortations in the first person plural

### **Passage #3**

*A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, "Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?" And he answered him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."*

- **ANSWER:** Parables (Luke 13:6-9)
  - ▷ The wording of the introduction
  - ▷ Short story with unidentified characters
  - ▷ Contextually, it prompts the response of repentance

### **Passage #4**

*These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works, who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke! I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.*

- **ANSWER:** Poetry (Psalm 104:27-33)
  - ▷ Parallelism
  - ▷ Imagery
  - ▷ A psalm because it is written in the first person and directed to God

### Passage #5

Now an old prophet lived in Bethel. And his sons came and told him all that the man of God had done that day in Bethel. They also told to their father the words that he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, “Which way did he go?” And his sons showed him the way that the man of God who came from Judah had gone. And he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him and he mounted it. And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak. And he said to him, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” And he said, “I am.” Then he said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.”

- ANSWER: History or Narrative (1 Kings 13:11-15)
  - ▷ Characters in a series of events
  - ▷ Not a parable because it doesn't function to illustrate a single point
  - ▷ Historical place names

### Passage #6

You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. You shall not eat any abomination. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof, are unclean for you. And the pig, because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.

- ANSWER: Law (Deuteronomy 14:1-8)
  - ▷ Consistent use of second person plural
  - ▷ Frequent imperatives
  - ▷ Directed from God to his people

### Passage #7

After saying this, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is he?” And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

- ANSWER: Gospels (John 7:9-13)
  - ▷ Historical information about Jesus
  - ▷ Narrative detail
  - ▷ Contextually, is situated between passages of teaching

### Passage #8

Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool. An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him. Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly. If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.

- ANSWER: Proverbs (Proverbs 17:9-14)
  - ▷ Short, “rapid-fire” statements
  - ▷ Difficult to see transitions; appears to be a collection of sayings
  - ▷ Content is about wisdom, folly

Variations on a Theme (5 min):  
Introduce your students to the ninth study strategy, which they will practice in the homework assignment. Ensure that they are clear about what’s expected of them before they attempt the homework. The structure of this lesson is unusual since it doesn’t allow time for the students to practice the study strategy in advance of the homework.

### 🔗 VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Thus far, we have learned a number of strategies for studying particular texts. In this lesson we will introduce a new way of approaching the Bible: by doing thematic studies.

A thematic study is a way of bringing together a number of different verses that address a single topic. Therefore, for example, one could study the way in which suffering is portrayed in the letters of Paul. Though thematic studies can span the entire Bible, it is often profitable to limit the study to a particular biblical author, or even to a particular biblical book. This makes doing a thematic study more manageable.

### Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.

The methodology for doing a thematic study is simple. First, a theme must be chosen. Second, all the relevant texts addressing this theme must be identified and listed. It is within this second step that you may choose to limit your search to a particular sub-section of the Bible. Sometimes relevant texts can be identified through a series of word searches. Third, each passage should be studied carefully within its context and observations pertaining to the theme should be recorded. And fourth, once each text has been investigated, theological reflection should seek to harmonize the contributions made by each text. This most often will take the form of writing a theological summary of your investigation.



## § HOMEWORK

**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 3:17–4:9. Read this passage repeatedly. Record your observations and questions. Discern the main point and write it down. The rest of the homework assignment will deal with Philippians as a whole.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 3 to memorize that is personally significant.

**Day 2** Study the theme of joy in the letter to the Philippians. Do this by first recording all the verses in Philippians that are relevant to this theme. This may be done by looking for occurrences of forms of the words “joy” and “rejoice.”

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 3 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Day 3** Focus on the first half of the verses you recorded yesterday. Record your observations on how each reference contributes to our understanding of the theme of joy.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 29

**Day 4** Now focus on the second half of the verses you recorded on Day 2. Record your observations on how each reference contributes to our understanding of the theme of joy.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 36

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 22

**Day 5** Compose a written summary of your understanding of the theme of joy in Philippians. Use complete sentences. Reflect on how this theme may have altered your understanding of joy in the Christian life.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 9. Again, ensure that the students understand what they’ll be doing in this thematic study. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.



## § APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Review the following questions as you think about how you might apply Philippians to your life. In addition, record any reflections of your own.

1. Is your Christian life characterized by joy? Are you pursuing joy in God?
2. What are some examples of things that are excellent and worthy of praise (Phil 4:8)? How often do you think about these things?
3. Your own reflections:

## § ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993).
- Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Mosés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).
- Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997).
- Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
- Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994).





### Study on the Theme of Joy in Philippians

Reference: Observations:

· ANSWER:

1:4	joy – Paul’s prayers are made with joy because of their partnership
1:18	rejoice (2x) – Paul’s reaction to Christ being proclaimed and his contemplation of future deliverance
1:25	joy – linked with “progress” as the outcome of Paul’s ministry
2:2	joy – Paul’s joy will be completed by their unity and humility
2:17	rejoice – despite suffering, Paul can rejoice at their faith because on the day of Christ he will be proud that his labor was not in vain
2:18	rejoice – Paul calls them to rejoice with him despite suffering
2:28	rejoice – their reaction at seeing Epaphroditus again
2:29	joy – Paul commands them to receive Epaphroditus with joy; coupled with “honor such men”
3:1	rejoice – Paul commands them to rejoice “in the Lord”
4:1	joy – Paul calls the Philippian believers his joy and crown
4:4	rejoice (2x) – Paul commands them twice to rejoice
4:10	rejoiced – Paul’s reaction to their renewed concern for him

### WRITTEN SUMMARY

- **ANSWER:** *The theme of joy in Philippians is striking for several reasons. First, it is clear that joy can survive and even flourish in a context of suffering. Paul rejoices despite those seeking to afflict him (1:18); he rejoices even though he is being poured out as a drink offering (2:17); he commands the Philippians to rejoice even though they are suffering (1:29). Second, it is striking that joy is commanded. This is a repeated and emphasized injunction of the letter (2:18, 3:1, 4:4). It is assumed that the Philippians have the capacity to obey Paul’s command. Third, Paul places joy at the center of the Christian life. He will continue his ministry to the Philippians for their “joy in the faith” (1:25), he sets himself up as a model of joy (2:17-18), and as we already stated, he repeatedly commands the Philippians*

to rejoice. Fourth, seeking joy cannot be an impure pursuit because Paul desires it (2:2) and sends Epaphroditus for the joy of the Philippians (2:28), and unabashedly commands it. Fifth, and most importantly, joy is rooted in God. Paul uses the phrase “rejoice in the Lord” three times (3:1; 4:4, 10). Although the Philippians are often what prompts Paul’s rejoicing (whether it be their partnership or faith or help), the context of the letter makes it clear that Paul’s rejoicing is over the way in which God is being exalted in them as a work of grace (1:6, 2:13). So at every turn Paul shatters common ideas about joy. Joy can exist in the midst of suffering, it can be commanded, it is at the center of the Christian life, it should be pursued, and it is rooted in God alone.

#### **Main Point of Philippians 3:17–4:9**

- **ANSWER:** Paul exhorts the Philippians to follow his example and the godly examples of others. This exhortation is fleshed out with a number of commands relating to standing firm, agreeing in the Lord, rejoicing, praying, and meditating.

# “Of Making Many Books There Is No End”

# 10

## § INTRODUCTION

The emphasis in this course has been on studying the Bible for yourself, without the help of any secondary literature. The value of this habit cannot be stressed strongly enough. Constantly depending on other people’s work will deaden your own skills of observation and interpretation. There is nothing that can substitute for the joy and benefit of harvesting insights by, as it were, the sweat of your own brow. Studying, meditating, and letting the Word dwell in you richly will also bring the greatest life transformation.

That being said, there *is* a time and place for consulting the commentaries and other secondary literature. We would be foolish not to gain from the insights that have been granted to so many others who have gone before us. To that end, it is important to build your own theological library, so that you can use the research of others to enhance your own study of the Bible. Although your library will probably never match the library of your church, let alone the library of a seminary or university, it is helpful to have a few resources on hand. At the end of this session we provide a list of resources that you may want to buy. Slowly and steadily building your library, and actually *using the resources you have*, will bring lifelong benefit to your study of the Word.

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- learn, through discussion how Philippians portrays Christian joy
- practice identifying and correcting common mistakes in interpretation
- become familiar with some basic resources for a personal, theological library

**Prayer (5 min):** You may use Proverbs 4:5-7 (“Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.”) as the basis of your opening prayer. Plead with God for wisdom and insight into his Word.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):** Instruct the class to gather into groups of two to four. Ask the students to recite the memory verse that they chose to the other members of their group. Instruct the students to share *why* they chose that particular verse to memorize. If you have a smaller class, recitation can be done without breaking into smaller groups.



## TEACHING NOTES

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment. This assignment will afford you an opportunity to begin to talk about the application of Philippians.

After thoroughly discussing Paul's conception of joy in this epistle (remember to keep the conversation grounded in the text!), ask the students if they think about joy in the same way. Ask them if their Christian life is characterized by joy in God.

*Break (5 min)*

### **Sidebar 5: Secondary Literature and Literary Interpretation**

**(5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 10. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide." During this portion of the lesson it might be helpful for you to share some of your own reflections on the place of secondary literature and the value of first-hand discovery. Reassure the students that the lesson will return to a more direct discussion of secondary literature at the end of the lesson.

This lesson, like the last, might be somewhat overwhelming for the students since there is so much new information that they are being exposed to. Again, stress to your students that this is simply an initial presentation of genre analysis and that in some sense they will be learning about the different biblical genres and how to interpret them for the rest of their lives. Much more detailed research can be done as they study individual biblical books.

Since this lesson introduces the last study strategy, and since the previous lesson introduced the last principle of sound interpretation, you may want to squeeze a review of these strategies and principles somewhere in the lesson. You will also be reviewing all of them in your overview of the inductive process in Lesson 12.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** You may use Proverbs 4:5-7 as the basis of your opening prayer. Plead with God for wisdom and insight into his Word.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):**

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Secondary Literature and Literary Interpretation (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 10. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide."

**Interpreting the Biblical Genres (10 min):** Guide your students through this section, reading each of the citations.

**Exercise 1: Debunking Misinterpretations of Genre (25 min):**

**Secondary Resources—We Recommend Them (10 min):**

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled "Homework" in Lesson 10. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.





## STUDY GUIDE

In the last lesson we introduced the principle of literary interpretation. In this lesson we want to continue developing upon that principle by learning some of the “rules” for interpreting different genres found in the Bible.

This is not unrelated to use of secondary resources. Given the limited scope of this course, we cannot explore the various biblical genres in any depth. In your further inductive study, however, learning how to read each genre of the Bible will be a crucial part of your interpretive work. Therefore, in tackling any book of the Bible for study, you will probably have to lean heavily on secondary resources for guidance on the literary genre (and historical background) of the book.

### Interpreting the Biblical Genres

**(10 min):** Guide your students through this section, reading each of the citations. Feel free to make any additional comments about how to approach any of the biblical genres that are covered. You might want to visually represent the mountain ranges illustration relating to prophetic perspective.

### INTERPRETING THE BIBLICAL GENRES

Building upon the last lesson, this lesson will introduce you to some of the conversation in the secondary literature on the topic of interpreting the various biblical genres. We will proceed through the eight categories of genre that were introduced in the last lesson.

#### *Narrative*

Interpreting sections of narrative is harder to do without the broader context. Therefore it is very important to read large sections of narrative at a time. If you were ever to study the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, for instance, the step of reading each book in one sitting would be very important.

This is true because the meaning of individual narratives is to be found in the larger stories of which they are a part.

*“Note this carefully: every individual Old Testament narrative (bottom level) is at least a part of the greater narrative of Israel’s history in the world (the middle level), which in turn is a part of the ultimate narrative of God’s creation and his redemption of it (the top level). This ultimate narrative goes beyond the Old Testament through the New Testament. You will not fully do justice to any individual narrative without recognizing its part within the other two.”<sup>38</sup>*

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38 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.80 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

So, for example, in studying stories about King David, we must constantly remember his place in Israel's history and in God's plans of redemption. Fee and Stuart helpfully list ten principles for interpreting narratives. We will reproduce only five of them here:

- “1. An Old Testament narrative usually does not directly teach a doctrine.*
- 2. An Old Testament narrative usually illustrates a doctrine or doctrines taught propositionally elsewhere.*
- 3. Narratives record what happened—not necessarily what should have happened or what ought to happen every time. Therefore, not every narrative has an individual identifiable moral of the story.*
- 4. What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example for us. Frequently, it is just the opposite.*
- 5. In the final analysis, God is the hero of all biblical narratives.”<sup>39</sup>*

#### *Law*

Interpreting Old Testament law is difficult for a Christian because we must not only attempt to understand the original intent of Moses, but we must also interpret law in light of Christ's coming. When God gave the Law to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, he certainly had in mind the sending of his Son in the fullness of time. Here are two general guidelines for interpreting law and our relationship to it as Christians

*Do see the Old Testament law as God's fully inspired word for you.*

*Don't see the Old Testament law as God's direct command to you.*

*Do see the Old Testament law as the basis for the Old Covenant, and therefore for Israel's history.*

*Don't see the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the New Covenant except where specifically renewed.<sup>40</sup>*

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39 Ibid., 83-84.

40 Ibid., 163-164.

John Piper wrote the following comments in response to the question, “What then shall those who are justified do with the Law of Moses?”

*“Read it and meditate on it as those who are dead to it as the ground of your justification and the power of your sanctification. Read it and meditate on it as those for whom Christ is your righteousness and Christ is your sanctification. Which means read and mediate on it to know Christ better and to treasure him more. Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30; 14:9). So to know the God of the Old Testament is to know Christ. The more you see his glory and treasure his worth, the more you will be changed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:17-18), and love the way he loved—which is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10).”<sup>41</sup>*

We must remember, however, that for Israel the law was the covenant stipulations to be kept. It was demanded of them as God’s people.

#### *Prophecy*

As we have said before, interpreting prophecy entails more than looking for fulfillment of predictions. That is because prophecy includes more than just pronouncements about the future.

*“To see the prophets as primarily predictors of future events is to miss their primary function, which was to speak for God to their own contemporaries. ... [The prophets] are God’s mediators, or spokespersons, for the covenant. Through them God reminds people in the generations after Moses that if the Law is kept, blessing will result; but if not, punishment will ensue.”<sup>42</sup>*

When interpreting future-oriented prophecy, however, we should keep in mind this assertion:

*“The Bible itself offers the best guide to the interpretation of prophecy. It indicates which prophecies were fulfilled during the [Old Testament] and [New Testament] periods and suggests patterns for interpreting [Old Testament] prophecies today.”<sup>43</sup>*

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41 John Piper, “How to Use the Law Lawfully to Bear Fruit for God,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

42 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.166, 168 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

43 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 310.



One important thing to note about prophecy is its frequent double layering of time referents. Fee and Stuart again explain:

*“...Some of the prophecies of the near future were set against the background of the great, eschatological future, and sometimes they seem to blend.*

*...Thus there are some things in the prophets that may belong to the final events of the age. But the temporal judgments that are often spoken of in conjunction with those final events must not be pushed into the future as well...”<sup>44</sup>*

The common illustration used to communicate this point is one of parallel mountain ranges. From a distance it may appear that parallel mountain ranges are stacked upon one another. This can be compared to the prophetic vision of old covenant prophets who may not have been able to distinguish the first and second comings of the Messiah. As we move farther along in biblical history, however, it's as if we are coming upon the first mountain range, only to discover that a second mountain range stands behind it, and a great distance is fixed between the ranges. Therefore, in interpreting prophecy we must allow our own eschatological perspective to inform how we read this blending of the near and distant future.

### *Poetry*

Poetry is not to be interpreted mechanically. Rather, we should enjoy it for what it is! In addition, the inductive student should heed the following warning:

*“One needs to be aware that Hebrew poetry, by its very nature, was addressed, as it were, to the mind through the heart (i.e., much of the language is intentionally emotive). Therefore, one needs to be careful of over-exegeting the Psalms by finding special meanings in every word or phrase, where the poet may have intended none.*

*...It is likewise important to remember that the vocabulary of poetry is purposefully metaphorical. Thus one must take care to look for the intent of the metaphor.”<sup>45</sup>*

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44 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.182 Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

45 Ibid., 189, 190.

### *Proverbs*

Proverbs also pose a special challenge for those who are rigid in their approach to the Bible.

*“A common mistake in biblical interpretation and application is to give a proverbial saying the weight or force of a moral absolute. Proverbs are catchy little couplets designed to express practical truisms. They reflect principles of wisdom for godly living. They do not reflect moral laws that are to be applied absolutely to every conceivable life situation.”<sup>46</sup>*

Knowing the intended purpose of the proverbs helps us avoid misinterpretations.

*“Proverbs state a wise way to approach certain selected practical goals but do so in terms that cannot be treated like a divine warranty of success. The particular blessings, rewards, and opportunities mentioned in Proverbs are likely to follow if one will choose the wise courses of action outlined in the poetical, figurative language of the book.”<sup>47</sup>*

*“Each inspired proverb must be balanced with others and understood in comparison with the rest of Scripture. ...No proverb is a complete statement of truth. No proverb is so perfectly worded that it can stand up to the unreasonable demand that it apply in every situation at every time.”<sup>48</sup>*

### *Gospels*

The biblical Gospels are biographical in nature, but we would be mistaken to read them as though they were intended to be exhaustive accounts of what Jesus said and did (cf. John 21:25).

*“...in reading and studying the Gospels one must take seriously not only the evangelists’ interest in Jesus per se, what he did and said, but also their reasons for retelling the one story for their own readers. The evangelists, we have noted, were authors, not merely compilers. ...They were authors in the sense that with the*

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46 Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 89.

47 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.220. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

48 *Ibid.*, 222, 223.

*Spirit's help they creatively structured and rewrote the material to meet the needs of their readers.*<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, the Gospel writers selected, arranged, and adapted the material about Jesus that they had. The Gospels have *theological* agendas and not merely historical interest in Jesus.

*“Although it is not uncommon for scholars to argue that the gospel narratives are unreliable, we cannot really preserve the message of the New Testament if we minimize its historical foundation. Nevertheless, the Gospels were written not merely to communicate factual information, nor were they composed according to the methods and expectations of modern history-writing. The authors were very selective in the material they chose to include and, furthermore, presented it in a way that reflected their own (inspired) interpretation and application of the facts. They wrote as both historians and theologians.”*<sup>50</sup>

### *Parables*

There is still much current debate about how exactly we should interpret (and teach) the parables of Jesus. It does seem clear, though that we should not read too much into the details of the parable, but rather focus on what effect the parable was intended to have.

*“It is this ‘call for response’ nature of the parable that causes our great dilemma in interpreting them. For in some ways to interpret a parable is to destroy what it was originally. It is like interpreting a joke.*

*...The two things that capture the hearer of a joke and elicit a response of laughter are the same two things that captured the hearers of Jesus’ parables, namely their knowledge of the points of reference and the unexpected turn in the story.”*<sup>51</sup>

Thus, our way of preserving the force of the biblical parables is to retell the parable in such a way that the points of reference are comparable and the desired response is the same. There are a number of books that are solely devoted to interpreting the parables, including Blomberg’s *Interpreting the Parables* and Kistemaker’s *The Parables*.

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49 Ibid., 126-127.

50 Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 104.

51 Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.138, 139. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

## Epistles

By working through Philippians during this course, hopefully you have an idea of the challenges that a New Testament epistle presents. Here is Fee and Stuart's advice:

*"Most of our problems in interpreting the Epistles are due to this fact of their being occasional. We have the answers, but we do not always know what the questions or problems were, or even if there was a problem. It is much like listening to one end of a telephone conversation and trying to figure out who is on the other end and what that unseen party is saying. Yet in many cases it is especially important for us to try to hear 'the other end,' so that we know what our passage is an answer to."<sup>52</sup>*

The discipline of trying to hear the other end of the telephone conversation is sometimes called a mirror-reading of the text. Though this exercise can be dangerously speculative, it is sometimes an important part of interpreting a New Testament epistle (such as the book of Galatians).

### Exercise 1: Debunking Misinterpretations of Genre

**(25 min):** Read the instructions for this exercise. As in an exercise in the last lesson, you may proceed in one of two ways: 1) you could allow students to examine each passage and interpretation separately, pausing to discuss their ideas before moving to the next passage; or 2) you could allow your students to look over all eight passages and interpretations before facilitating discussion. Given the limited time, you may not be able to cover all eight passages. If that is your sense, then you may want to choose 4-6 passages on which to concentrate. Many of these misinterpretations require much more time to thoroughly discuss than is allowed. In the short time you have, therefore, be sure to stress that an understanding of genre must figure into the discussion of the passage's interpretation.

### 🔗 EXERCISE 1: DEBUNKING MISINTERPRETATIONS OF GENRE

Now that we've briefly surveyed basic interpretive principles for reading some of the major categories of biblical genre, we will try to put this knowledge to use.

2. Each of the following biblical passages is given with an interpretation. Interact with the interpretations by recording your agreements and disagreements with their methodology or conclusions. Support your ideas with arguments from the Bible. You may use your English Bibles to study the broader context.

#### Passage #1 – Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:3

<sup>10</sup> *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, <sup>11</sup> "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." <sup>13</sup> And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" [...]<sup>3</sup> And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son.*

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<sup>52</sup> Taken from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, p.48. Copyright © 1981, 1993, 2003, 2014 by Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee. Used by permission of Zondervan. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

*Interpretation:* “Christians have been wrong to see this prophecy (in 7:14) as referring to Jesus. In the Old Testament context, the sign is given to Ahaz. Moreover, the prophecy is fulfilled in the next chapter.”

- **ANSWER:** *This misinterpretation ignores the fact that prophecy can refer to the immediate and distant future simultaneously. Therefore, it can refer to Isaiah’s day and to the birth of Jesus (cf. Matt 1:23). This is apparent because if the prophecy only predicted the birth of Jesus, it would not make sense in its original context. But if it only referred to the time of Isaiah, then Matthew would be mistaken in his use of this text. The parallels between Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7 also suggest future fulfillment.*

**Passage #2 – Exodus 20:8-11**

<sup>8</sup> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

*Interpretation:* “No one will argue that the Ten Commandments aren’t binding on Christians today. But then why do we disregard the Sabbath command? We should observe Saturday, not Sunday, as a day of rest because that is when the Jews rested. Furthermore, work of any kind on the Sabbath should be prohibited.”

- **ANSWER:** *The interpretation goes astray by assuming that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the application of this commandment to Israel and to us today. This commandment should be read in the light of Christ’s coming, his death and resurrection. Whether we should celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday or if the Sabbath has been replaced by a new reality is a matter of interpretation. In either case, this interpretation misunderstands the genre of Old Testament Law.*

**Passage #3 – Psalm 44:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> *Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way;*  
<sup>19</sup> *yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death.* <sup>20</sup> *If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god,* <sup>21</sup> *would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.* <sup>22</sup> *Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.* <sup>23</sup> *Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!* <sup>24</sup> *Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?* <sup>25</sup> *For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground.*

*Interpretation:* “This psalm is troubling. It teaches us that sometimes God forgets about us, and even ‘goes to sleep.’ Or, I suppose it could be teaching us that it is okay to question God or to get angry with him. Either way, it’s hard to see why this is in the Bible.”

- **ANSWER:** *This interpretation fails on several counts. Because this genre is poetry, it would be wrong to suppose that the psalmist thinks that the Lord is literally sleeping. Rather, the psalmist is expressing his feelings about the Lord’s apparent absence by using poetic language. Furthermore, this interpretation does not condone anger toward God. Within the broader context of the psalm, the psalmist expresses great confidence in God (vv. 1-8, 26). So these verses should be seen as a plea to God.*

**Passage #4 – Judges 4:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> *Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.* <sup>5</sup> *She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.* <sup>6</sup> *She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-  
naphtali and said to him, “Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking <sup>10,000</sup> from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.’”* <sup>7</sup> *And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?”* <sup>8</sup> *Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”* <sup>9</sup> *And she said, “I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”* *Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.*

*Interpretation:* “This text clearly demonstrates that women had positions of leadership within the Old Testament. Therefore, we should not bar a woman from being an elder or pastor in our churches today.”

- **ANSWER:** *This fourth interpretation also commits an error related to genre. It is an interpretive leap to suggest that because Deborah had a position of leadership, God approved of that leadership. It is another leap to suggest that it legitimates women’s leadership in specific roles in the church. On the contrary, it is more reasonable to believe that Deborah’s leadership was an indictment of the weakness of Barak and the other men. Rather than reflecting God’s will, this period of judges in general was a time in which “every man did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).*

**Passage #5 – Proverbs 22:4-6**

<sup>4</sup> *The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*

<sup>5</sup> *Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.* <sup>6</sup> *Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*

*Interpretation:* “According to this passage, if someone isn’t rich and honorable, then they must not be humble. Furthermore, if parents have a wayward child it is clearly a sign that the parents failed somehow in their parenting.”

- **ANSWER:** *This interpretation misunderstands the genre of Proverbs. The aim of the book is to impart practical wisdom for living a godly life. Therefore, the proverbs within the book should be read as guidelines for such a life, and not as black-and-white promises. Training of children is important and wise, and in general will result in their obedience. But this does not imply that God promises that every godly parent will raise a godly child if they instruct them biblically.*

**Passage #6 – John 2:13-16**

<sup>13</sup> *The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* <sup>14</sup> *In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.* <sup>15</sup> *And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and over-turned their tables.* <sup>16</sup> *And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”*

*Interpretation:* “The gospel writers couldn’t get their facts straight. The author of the gospel of John places this incident near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, while the synoptic gospels place it near the end (cf. Matt 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-18, Luke 19:45-46). This demonstrates that the gospels are unreliable as historical accounts of what Jesus said and did.”

- **ANSWER:** *This interpretation does not accurately represent what gospels are. Gospels are not exhaustive, rigidly-chronological accounts of everything Jesus did. Each gospel writer had to choose what to include in their gospel as they made their own theological point (cf. John 20:30-31). Therefore, it is possible that there were two temple cleansings in Jesus’ ministry or that John decided to include this episode at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to make a theological point. Either way, the gospel would not be unreliable. It must be judged on its own terms and not our modern ones. Thus, John’s gospel would be a reliable narrative account of a historical person for a specific, theological agenda.*

**Passage #7 – 1 Corinthians 11:4-8**

<sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, <sup>5</sup> but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head- it is the same as if her head were shaven. <sup>6</sup> For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. <sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

*Interpretation:* “Paul lays down a clear command in this passage. Women should cover their head in church, plain and simple. If you want to discard this command as culturally irrelevant, you might as well throw out all of Paul’s commands to the church.”

- **ANSWER:** *To correctly interpret this difficult passage, one must reconstruct the situation by paying careful attention to the passage and by researching the historical setting. It is probable that some women in the congregation were flaunting social norms in the name of religious freedom. A rough equivalent in our culture would be men wearing dresses to church. Therefore, Paul calls the church to judge for themselves whether this is proper (11:13). He argues that in their culture, a woman’s uncovered head in a public gathering would convey the wrong message about her sexual identity. Therefore the principle remains binding, but not the specific, cultural application.*



**Passage #8 – Luke 18:2-8**

<sup>2</sup> He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ <sup>4</sup> For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.’” <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. <sup>7</sup> And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?” <sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

*Interpretation:* “Does Jesus really equate God with an unjust judge in this passage? It also seems as if this parable teaches that prayer is ‘wearing down’ or ‘bothering’ God. Because the elect are parallel to the widow in the parable, are we to understand that the elect are likewise poor and destitute? Who is the church’s adversary (v. 3)?”

- **ANSWER:** *This misinterpretation simply reads too much specificity into Jesus’ parable, thereby misunderstanding what a parable is. A parable is an illustrative story that is meant to make one main point and to call for a response from its audience. In this case, Luke 18:1 makes this purpose explicit: “[Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” The details of this story are incidental to this main point. Therefore, we should not look for parables to have exact parallels in their particulars or to have a hidden meaning.*

**Secondary Resources—We Recommend Them (10 min):**

After pressing home the truth in John Piper’s assertion, read through the list of secondary resources and our comments on each. It would be very helpful if you could bring in some hard copies of resources that have helped you. Please feel free to supplement our list with any of your own suggestions.

🔗 **SECONDARY RESOURCES—WE RECOMMEND THEM**

Before we dive into some helpful secondary resources, keep this in mind:

*“We must beware of the temptation to replace the study of Scripture with the reading of good books about the Scripture. If you want to know if a man has studied well, don’t ask him to show you his library. Ask him to show you his personal notebooks where he has recorded his own authentic insights into the Word of God.”<sup>53</sup>*

This course is designed to help you mine your own authentic insights from the Word of God. As the introduction suggests, however, it would be foolish to ignore the insights that God has given to the great men and women of previous generations.

**Ten Strategies for Studying the Text**

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.
10. Consult secondary resources.

Consulting secondary resources, then, is the tenth and final study strategy we are presenting in this course. It is deliberately the last strategy because we believe it is best to do the first nine steps *before* you consult other resources. Consulting secondary resources, however, does not end your inductive study. Rather, reading the arguments of a commentator on the biblical text should send you back to the text to see if what they are asserting is true. Remember to be a good Berean (Acts 17:10-12)!

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53 John Piper, “The Ministry of the Word,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

### *Resources We Recommend*

We consider the following list to be but a few of the resources that could be helpful to you as you pursue your own inductive Bible study. By recommending these resources, we do not thereby condone everything that is written in them.

- ▷ *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1994)  
*A single-volume Bible commentary representing the evangelical perspective. This commentary has articles written by excellent scholars in their field of expertise.*
  
- ▷ IVP Bible Dictionary Series  
*Reference works containing articles on biblical themes, interpretation, historical context, and each book of the Bible.*
  
- ▷ Ferguson, Everett, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003).  
*The third edition is an updated and expanded version of a standard work on the historical backgrounds to early Christianity.*
  
- ▷ Dillard, Raymond B. and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) and D. A. Carson et al., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).  
*Introductions to the historical setting and meaning of the Old and New Testament. These volumes deal with critical methodology and survey past scholarship.*
  
- ▷ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001)  
*A valuable reference with entries on topics within systematic, historical, and philosophical theology.*
  
- ▷ Carson, D. A., *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).  
*This book alerts its readers to common exegetical fallacies. Reading this book will make you more aware of the mistakes you unwittingly commit.*

- ▷ Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).  
*A clear, readable, and worshipful presentation of systematic theology.*
- ▷ *Desiring God Ministries* (desiringGod.org)  
*A vast online resource of John Piper's ministry. Search for the article, "What Are Some Books That DG Recommends?"*
- ▷ DeRouchie, Jason S., ed. *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus' Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013).  
*An Old Testament survey textbook, aiming to show the make clear the ways in which the Old Testament points to Christ and portrays the back-drop to the revelation of the New Testament.*
- ▷ Plummer, Robert L. *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible. 40 Questions*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010.  
*Answers 40 questions that are common amongst students of the Word.*
- ▷ Doriani, Daniel M. *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001.  
*Practical advice to appropriately apply the Bible and avoid mishandling scripture.*

In addition to these resources, see also the resources that are listed in the Additional Resources sections throughout the course. We also recommend online resources, such as BibleArc.com, Logos, and Accordance, where you can gain access to thousands of resources.



**Day 1** Concentrate your study on Philippians 4:10-23. Read this passage repeatedly. Combine all the strategies that we have learned thus far: sentence flows, making observations, discerning the main point, asking questions, checking cross-references, logical analysis, concordance work, comparing translations, and investigating biblical themes.

Choose a verse or verses from Philippians 4 to memorize that is personally significant.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 37

**Day 2** Continue your inductive study of Philippians 4:10-23.

Read the verse(s) from Philippians 4 that you have chosen to memorize, including the reference, ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 27

**Day 3** Continue your inductive study of Philippians 4:10-23.

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud, referring back to your Bible if you need to.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 28

**Day 4** *After you have done all of your own work, read the commentary handout (provided by your teacher for this session).*

Read your memory verse ten times aloud. Then repeat it from memory ten times aloud.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 34

**[Closing (5 min):**

Read the section labeled  
“Homework.”

*Please note:* It is your responsibility to provide the students with a photocopy of a commentary for their homework assignment! Choose a commentary that will be understandable to your students but detailed in its exposition (e.g., the *NIV Application Commentary on Philippians* by Frank Thielman).

Photocopy the discussion of Philippians 4:10-23 in its entirety. Distribute this photocopy to each student at the end of this lesson.

Your students will need this photocopy in order to complete their homework assignment.

If your students have access to a theological library (such as a church library) you may not have to provide them with a photocopy of the commentary. But, in this case, we would suggest that all your students study the same commentary in order to facilitate a productive discussion.

Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.

**Day 5** After reading the commentary, compare your own inductive study to it. What have you gained by consulting a secondary resource? What areas of agreement and disagreement do you have? What are the benefits and limitations of a commentary? Come to the next session prepared to discuss your thoughts.

Attempt to recite your memory verse ten times aloud without first reading it. Be prepared to recite the verse in class from memory and to share your reason for choosing this verse.



  
 **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- ▷ William W. Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993).
- ▷ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Mosés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).
- ▷ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).
- ▷ Tremper Longman III, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997).
- ▷ Leland Ryken, *Words of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
- ▷ Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1994).





### Inductive Study of Philippians 4:10-23

**ANSWER:**

*Note: This key will not provide any sentence flows.*

*Sample Observations:*

- A1. *For Paul, plenty and abundance are something to be “faced” (v. 12). It seems as if plenty and abundance can be as much of a stumbling block as hunger and need.*
- A2. *Verse 13 is in the context of contentment in all circumstances, and therefore probably refers to that rather than feats of physical strength or whatever else.*
- A3. *Paul talks as if the gospel had a “beginning” (v. 15). This reminds us to be sensitive to the historical dimension of the Christian faith.*

*Sample Questions:*

- A1. *Why did the Philippians have no opportunity to show concern for Paul (v. 10)?*
- A2. *Does Paul equate the “beginning of the gospel” with Paul’s time in Macedonia? Does that mean that for the Philippians, the first time they heard the gospel message from Paul is considered the “beginning of the gospel” for them?*
- A3. *Why does Paul say, “Even in Thessalonica...?” Is this because Thessalonica is so close to Philippi or because Paul was persecuted there or because he arrived there so shortly after ministering in Philippi?*
- A4. *Is there any theological purpose for the greetings section?*

*Use of the Old Testament?*

- A1. *There are no evident allusions to the Old Testament in this passage*

*Note: This key will not explore all the cross-references.*

*Logical Paraphrase:*

*“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. That’s not to say that you weren’t concerned—you were—but you had no opportunity to demonstrate it. And unless you think that I am overly excited about receiving your gift, I want you to know that I am not speaking of being in need. I am not “in need” because I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in. You see, I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. My secret is that I can endure all these circumstances by trusting in the one who strengthens me, that is, Jesus. But even though I could have done without your gift, it was nevertheless kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians know that when I first began to proclaim the gospel to you and then left Macedonia, there was no other church that had this kind of give-and-take relationship. So what I’m trying to say is that I value your friendship. Yes, even in Thessalonica which is so close and is, as you know, a much larger city than Philippi—even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. Again, don’t make the mistake of thinking I’m greedy or am asking you for more money in an underhanded way. No, I am actually most interested in your spiritual growth and reward, and your giving is a sign that God is blessing you. But I have indeed received everything you sent and that is more than enough. I am now well supplied because I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent (and yes, he did complete his mission). From God’s perspective these gifts are like a fragrant offering and a sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to him. And in return for your generosity, God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ...talk about a generous giver! To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

### Concordance Work:

- A1. *The word behind the ESV's "credit" (v. 17) is a common Greek word often translated as "word" in other passages. If Hebrews 4:13 is a parallel, the "credit" or "account" is not something we receive from God but something we give to him.*
- A2. *The word "fruit" can refer to financial giving (cf. the NASB or Greek of Rom 15:28). The word is used twice in previous chapters of Philippians (1:11, 22). It is interesting to meditate on why obedience is so often called "fruit" in the New Testament. Why is this particular metaphor so instructive?*

### Translation Comparison:

- A1. *The KJV, again, is obscure to most modern readers. Words such as "careful" (v. 10), "therewith" (v. 11), "abased" (v. 12), and "communicate" (v. 14) are either unintelligible or used differently than we would use these words and likewise phrases such as "in respect of want" (v. 11) are awkward in modern English. The KJV is an excellent translation, but not as useful to the 21st century reader.*
- A2. *The phrase "in the beginning of the gospel" (v. 15, ESV) is interpreted as "at the first preaching of the gospel" (NAS), "in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel" (NIV), and "when I first brought you the Good News" (NLT).*
- A3. *The phrase "in giving and receiving" (v. 15, ESV) is interpreted as "financial help" (NLT) and "the give-and-take of this work" (The Message).*
- A4. *The phrase "the fruit that increases to your credit" (v. 17, ESV) is translated by "the profit which increases to your account" (NAS), "a reward for your kindness" (NLT), and "the blessing that issues from generosity" (The Message).*



# Applying the Word

# 11

## § INTRODUCTION

We have now come to what is perhaps the most important lesson of this course, because in it we will focus on the application of the Word. The lessons preceding this one have been building up to it, for if we are to rightly apply the Word we must first interpret it accurately. But sound interpretation is not enough! Listen to the warning of C. J. Mahaney:

*However, we can often forget that a knowledge of Scripture alone is not sufficient. Of course, James won't let us forget that we must "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). This verse tells us that apart from obedience, knowledge can be deceptive.*

*...The problem occurs when we assume that merely attending a conference, or listening to a sermon, or reading a book [or, we could add, studying the Bible] signifies actual change. We can even be deeply moved by profound scriptural truth but never actually grow in godliness. In his commentary on the epistle of James, Peter Davids elaborates, "No matter how extensive one's scriptural knowledge, how amazing one's memory, it is self-deception if that is all there is. True knowledge is the prelude to action, and it is obedience to the Word that counts in the end."<sup>54</sup>*

Therefore, this lesson will attempt to provide some principles for appropriate application of the Word. Most often, though, it is not a matter of understanding what we must do—we often know what the Word is calling us to. Most often it is a matter of actually putting the Word into practice.

## § LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▶ discern what consultation of secondary resources can and cannot accomplish
- ▶ explain some ways in which the Word can be inappropriately applied to our lives
- ▶ understand several principles for appropriate application

**Prayer (5 min):** Use James 1:22-25 ("But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.") or another passage of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):** Instruct the class to gather into groups of two to four. Ask the students to recite the memory verse that they chose to the other members of their group. Instruct the students to share why they chose that particular verse to memorize. If you have a smaller class, recitation can be done without breaking into smaller groups.

It might be helpful at this point to ask students how they plan to retain the verses they've memorized in Philippians for the long-term. Do they plan to review these verses periodically?

54 C. J. Mahaney, "The Pastor's Priorities," in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 120.



**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment. As the instructor, you will have to be extremely selective in what you decide to talk about during this time since you will certainly have much more than you can adequately cover in 50 minutes.

Don't neglect to discuss their impression of the commentary and what they learned from it.

Seize this opportunity to stress again the importance of first-hand discovery.

*Break (5 min)*

**Sidebar 5: Application (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 11. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide." Ensure that your students understand the difference between a text's meaning and its significance(s).

This lesson is straightforward, but not easy to teach! Emphasize to your students that they will grow in their ability to apply the Word appropriately as they practice and pray. Encourage them to imitate good role models in this regard.

Discussing the application of Philemon could fill the entire two hours of instruction. So admittedly, the exercise will have to be brief. In addition to what is included in the suggested answer, here is a very helpful discussion of Philemon composed by Daniel R. Streett, "Book of Philemon," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 587:

*Philemon addresses such a particular historical situation that one might legitimately question whether the letter has any contemporary theological significance. While Philemon is hardly a doctrinal treatise or a sustained theological argument, beneath its surface lies a profound conception of Christian community.*

*Although the letter is primarily for Philemon, it is also addressed to the church in his house, an indication that Paul saw the situation not merely as a private matter, but one that involved the larger church body, who would in turn encourage Philemon to carry out Paul's wishes. Paul stresses this relational dynamic by identifying Onesimus as his "child" and his own heart, as well as appealing to his *koinōnia* with Philemon.*

*If the believing community is to be so integrally connected, it must be characterized, as a reflection of its Lord, by reconciliation and forgiveness. Paul encourages Philemon to go the second mile in receiving Onesimus back. As an imitator of Christ, Paul offers to pay Onesimus's debts, if necessary, to effect reconciliation, but it is clear that he expects Philemon also to renounce his rights and make no such demands.*

*Most importantly, Paul manifests his conviction that, as a new society called forth by God's redemptive act in Christ, the church is to be markedly different from the surrounding society, most notably in the importance commonly attached to social and legal status. Paul's appeal in v. 16 is a natural corollary to his pronouncements elsewhere. Within the body of Christ, social distinctions are radically relativized in the light of a common relation to Christ.*

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** Use James 1:22-25 or another passage of your choosing as the basis for your opening prayer.

**Review Memory Verse (5 min):**

**Discussion (50 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Application (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 11. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.”

**Inappropriate Application (10 min):** Read through this section and then allow your students to think about the question before you discuss it as a group. See the suggested answer for more instructions.

**Appropriate Application (15 min):** Guide your class through the ten principles for appropriate application listed in this section.

**Exercise: Summarize and Apply Philemon (20 min):** This exercise is designed to introduce the final two steps in the inductive process.

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled “Homework” in Lesson 11.



## STUDY GUIDE

**Application (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 11. Then proceed through the section labeled “Study Guide.” Ensure that your students understand the difference between a text’s meaning and its significance(s).

The application of God’s Word is an essential step in inductive study. But during this course thus far we’ve concentrated on understanding the message of Philippians in its original, historical context. Our inductive study of Philippians has confirmed that the situation Paul is addressing is, in some ways, radically different from our own. Aside from historical and cultural differences, it is almost too obvious to state that we, as twenty-first century readers, did not send a gift to Paul! Likewise, Paul’s travel plans are not of immediate relevance to us. But as we discerned earlier in this course, these two things were part of the occasion for Paul writing the letter. So how can this letter, then, be relevant and even authoritative for us? To convey this problem most acutely, imagine that some present-day missionary from Italy was thanking friends of his in Greece for supporting him financially. Somehow your church receives a copy of this letter and your pastor encourages you to read from it as determinative for your life! How can this be?

The fact of Paul’s apostleship and the doctrine of inspiration do, in fact, make this letter binding on us today. But this still does not solve the problem of how we should apply Philippians appropriately.

The first thing to recognize is that the specific application of Philippians may vary from person to person or from church to church. Certainly there are general injunctions that would remain the same. But since we are all in different places spiritually, we will need to have the Word address and shape us in different ways. So while the original meaning is fixed, the application might vary in its details:

*“The terminology adopted for the stages of application varies. Some speak of application as part of interpretation, while others think of it as a separate step. Some talk of what the text meant versus what it means. One of the most popular distinctions that evangelicals have utilized follows E. D. Hirsch’s discussion of meaning vs. significance. ‘Meaning’ refers to the ideas the biblical text originally intended to communicate to its readers; ‘significance’ refers to the implications of that meaning in different, later situations. From this vantage point, therefore, the meaning of any given passage of Scripture remains consistent no matter who is reading the text, while its significance may vary from reader to reader.”<sup>55</sup>*

55 Klein et. al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 401.



Again, let us cite an excerpt from Bethlehem's Affirmation of Faith:

*...Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations.<sup>56</sup>*

## 🔗 INAPPROPRIATE APPLICATION

There are at least three ways in which it would be inappropriate to apply Philippians. First, we should avoid **over-spiritualizing** the text. An example of this might be considering Paul's imprisonment and then asking about what "spiritual" prisons we find ourselves in and what our attitude should be in waiting for deliverance. Another bogus question would be to ask yourself, "Who are the mutilators of the flesh in my life?" and then derive some kind of spiritual insight based on a parallel from Philippians 3. Although these examples may be exaggerated, spiritualizing is a common tendency in the church.

Second, we should beware of **uncritical imitation** of biblical characters. Philippians is somewhat unusual in this regard since Paul deliberately offers himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as models for the Philippians. This mistake is much more common in applying the examples of Old Testament characters who aren't necessarily described in order to commend for imitation, but described for other reasons. But even in Philippians it would be a mistake to infer that every missionary gift should be hand-delivered or that imprisonment is always God's plan for advancing the gospel through missionaries.

Third, we shouldn't **moralize** from the text. A possible example of this would be to construct a lengthy exhortation from Philippians 1:15. Such an exhortation could run something like this: "Paul here is laying out the two ways in which one can preach the gospel. You can preach it from envy or you can choose to preach it from goodwill. Everyone inevitably falls into one of these two camps. So the question this text is asking you is: 'What kind of preacher of the gospel will you be? Will you preach from envy or from goodwill?' Therefore, let's be those who preach from goodwill." As you can see, this exhortation is not totally invalid, but it is not directly related to what Paul is intending in the text and it can easily eclipse the intended message of Philippians.

### **Inappropriate Application**

**(10 min):** Read through this section and then allow your students to think about the question before you discuss it as a group.

In preparation for this lesson, you should think of misapplications of the Word that you've commonly encountered. If possible and appropriate, share the specifics of some of these misapplications without slandering the ones who may have committed them. In discussion of this point, the aim is to make students aware that misapplication is possible. Simply knowing this will go a long way in preventing misapplications of the Word that arise chiefly from ignorance or uncritical reflection.

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<sup>56</sup> Taken from Elder Affirmation of Faith, Section 1.3.

1. Brainstorm other ways in which the book of Philippians could be misapplied. Or think about invalid approaches to application that you've encountered in other parts of the Bible. Record your thoughts below and be prepared to share them with the class

· **ANSWER:** *Answers will vary*

### APPROPRIATE APPLICATION

**Appropriate Application (15 min):** Guide your class through the ten principles for appropriate application listed in this section. You may want to pause after reading each principle's explanation so that your students have the opportunity to ask questions or make comments. If you desire, please supplement this list with any suggestions of your own. It would also be helpful to point students toward resources that have helped you in the application of God's Word.

Therefore, how *should* we apply Philippians? This lesson will introduce ten general principles for the appropriate application of the Word. They are listed below and then explained in more detail.

#### Ten Principles for Appropriate Application

1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.
2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.
3. Receive God's Word directly in comparable situations.
4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.
5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.
6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.
7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.
8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.
9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.
10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

1. *Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.*

This first principle simply recognizes that application follows observation and interpretation in the inductive process. If you are careful and deliberate in your interpretation of the Bible, appropriate application will come much more easily. Don't discard all of the previous work you've done in interpretation once it comes time for application.

In addition, it is imperative that we thoroughly understand the author's main point in each section and his overall purpose in writing. Our application should be in line with the author's intended, textual effect. In other words, ask yourself what the original author was trying to accomplish in writing. Then, ask yourself whether the author's purpose is being realized in your reading of the text. As part of this process it is also fitting to ask what God may have intended in including the particular book as a part of his Holy Scripture. What messages and benefits would the church of Jesus Christ be lacking if this book was not included in the canon?

Here are reflections that complement what we've been stressing:

*"I have argued that the Bible is much more than a book of information, more even than divinely revealed information. It is a collection of divine communicative actions that continue to work their effects in those who read in Spirit and truth.*

*How should we respond to Scripture as God's communicative action? For every communicative action there is an equal and opposite communicative reaction. Well, not quite. Readers do not always behave according to Newton's third law of motion. Yet responsive readers should respond to the biblical text in a fitting manner, a manner that is appropriate to what the text itself is doing. Because God does many things with words, our responses too will be varied: we must affirm the doctrine, obey the law, hold fast in hope to the promises, rejoice in the gospel."<sup>57</sup>*

For more from Vanhoozer on this topic, see the Teaching Notes.

This is exactly right. Doctrine should be affirmed, promises should be cherished, warnings should be heeded, commands should be practiced, arguments should be understood, etc. We ought to put ourselves in the pathway that the text and Spirit are already moving along.

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57 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2002), 39.

2. *Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.*

The Bible is about God. It is a revelation of his character and his wise plan for creation. Certainly the Bible includes God's will for our lives, but we misunderstand the Bible if we think it is primarily about us.

Therefore, in reading the Bible we should always be alert to what the Bible is revealing to us about the nature and glory of God. And whatever we learn of God from the Bible we must be ready to embrace and worship. So as you read, consciously think about what the text is teaching us about God.

More specifically, though, we ought to be Christ-centered in our reading of the Bible. As Jesus instructed his disciples, all Scripture is about him.

Luke 24:25-27, 44-48

*<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ...<sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things."*

John 5:39-40

*<sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*

3. *Receive God's Word directly in comparable situations.*

There are times when the original recipients will be in a situation that is directly comparable to situations that we find ourselves in. In these instances, it is easy to apply the Bible's teaching. So, for example, you may find yourself worrying about the future. Jesus spoke directly to this situation in Matthew 6:25-34. As readers of the Bible, we have little to do in converting this first-century message into 21st-century application.

The skill in applying this principle, however, is in discerning what are comparable situations. Practice and the community of faith will help you develop this needed discernment.

4. *Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.*

This principle of application should be used in conjunction with the previous one. There are times when the original recipients are not in directly comparable situations to our own. This will often happen when cultural or historical situations are different from what we experience today.

John Piper leads us through an application of this principle:

**“A Holy Kiss of Affection**

*First, then, consider the holy kiss in verse 16. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” After saying Greet thirteen times, he now gives them one urging for how to do it. Kiss my precious friends for me. If I were there, I would kiss them. What should we think about the “holy kiss” (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)? Five observations may be helpful.*

**1. It Was a Common Custom**

*It was a widespread custom outside the church to kiss friends and guests. When Jesus was invited to dinner by Simon the Pharisee, Simon didn’t kiss him, but a woman anointed his feet and kissed him. Jesus said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet” (Luke 7:45). It was a gracious custom. That’s why it wasn’t strange when Judas greeted Jesus with a kiss (Luke 22:48). It was a common greeting.*

**2. It Was Holy**

*Paul said that the kiss Christians should use is holy. He called it a holy kiss. There are many ways for a kiss to be unholy. Judas’ kiss of betrayal certainly was unholy. The kiss of adultery is unholy. The kiss of fornication is unholy. The kiss of homosexuality is unholy. The kiss of seduction is unholy. I’m sure Paul would say, “If that’s the only way you can kiss, don’t kiss.” But there is another way to kiss. Pure, holy, deep, blood-bought affection.*

### **3. It Was Family Affection**

*This affection is a family affection, not a romantic one. It's the affection I felt when I kissed my father goodbye five hundred times as a boy sending him off to preach the gospel, and then welcoming him home again.*

### **4. It Was a Physical Demonstration**

*The holy kiss is physically demonstrative, not just words. Healthy families are not afraid to touch each other. It's the mark of unselfconscious security and love and warmth. A visiting woman came up to me at the all-campus outdoor service last August and said, "I love to watch the men of your church. They seem natural and manly in the way they embrace each other." I felt very happy about that.*

### **5. It Was Culturally Conditioned**

*I doubt that we should say that this "kiss of love" (1 Peter 5:14) is a universally binding requirement for all believers in all times and all places. Paul didn't describe it as an obligation rooted in creation or in the gospel. He took what was there in the culture and said, "Make it holy." There may be cultures and situations where a kiss would not communicate what Paul desires. Hugging might. Handshaking might. But it may be that Paul would say, "The cultural basis that gives rise to the holy kiss is a better cultural basis than one that leaves us with no meaningful physical expressions of family affection among Christians." In other words, if we don't have better cultural expressions of family affection, we probably should go back to this one.*

*So that's our first consideration. Paul wants the believers in Rome—and us—not just to greet each other with words but with more demonstrative expressions that say: You, as fellow believer in Christ, are precious to me.<sup>58</sup>*

You will notice in this excerpt that John Piper is searching for what the holy kiss was intended to communicate. Understanding this yields a principle that is enduring and can be appropriately and culturally applied in our own setting.

Often, it is helpful to use the second principle in tandem with this fourth one. If the historical situation is markedly different, what does the passage in question teach us about God? How might we manifest the character of God in our own culture and time?

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58 John Piper, "Carry My Love to My Beloved," an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

5. *Look for the means and motivation for obedience.*

It is easy to limit application to identifying biblical commands and then trying to obey them, but if we strip the biblical commands of the grace that enables obedience and the grace that motivates it, we are at best losing the power for obedience and at worst becoming legalists. Therefore, in applying Scripture and seeking to obey it, always look to see whether the text provides the means or motivation for obedience. Incorporate these things in your reflection and application.

6. *Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.*

This principle grows out of canonical interpretation, which we explained in Lesson 5. The Bible communicates one unified message. Therefore, you should be extremely suspicious of an application which seems to contradict another teaching of Scripture, especially if that other teaching comes from a clearer portion of Scripture or a didactic one. Also, remember to place your study and application within the broader flow of redemptive history. A right handling of this principle would preclude hasty application of Old Testament passages.

7. *Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.*

The Bible was given to the church as well as to the individual believer. When attempting to apply and obey the Bible, remember that you are not the first one to read and interpret the Bible. There is a rich history and community of saints who have gone before you. So recognize your own limitations and the gifts of others by checking your application against church tradition. This is not to say, however, that the church has the same authority as the Bible. We believe that it is Scripture alone that is the final authority for matters of faith and practice.

In particular, you ought to check your application of the Bible against the teaching of your local church and the men of God whom God has placed over you. This becomes most pressing in cases in which your tentative application seems unusual or problematic for some reason.

8. *Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.*

Although not an infallible test, it is wise to determine whether your application of the Word meets the standard of Jesus' statement of the essence of the Law and Prophets. Certainly no valid application of the Bible would urge us not to love God or our neighbor.

This principle has some resonance with the work of Jonathan Edwards on revival. In his book *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* Edwards offers some positive signs that indicate that the Spirit of God is genuinely at work. Here is Sam Storms' discussion:

*"Therefore, if people are led to deeper conviction that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, if they are led to deeper devotion and esteem for Christ, if they are led to more honorable thoughts of him, 'it is a sure sign that it is the true and right Spirit' (110). Satan would never do this.*

*...Edwards' point is that there are certain things that Satan either cannot do or would not do: he would not awaken the conscience of the sinner or make them sensible of sin and guilt; he would not confirm their belief in or their love for the Son of God; he would not increase their love for and belief in the truth and authority of the Scriptures; he would not increase our love or humility."<sup>59</sup>*

The same could be said of our application of Scripture. We can be sure that we are not being deceived if our interpretation and application of the Bible is leading to a greater love for God and for neighbor. This, however, does not mean that we shouldn't carefully determine whether the text we are studying is leading us to love God and neighbor in a way we are not anticipating. Rightly interpreting and applying Scripture will show us how to love God and neighbor.

9. *Pray to God throughout the process of application.*

We will state the obvious lest it be taken for granted. In applying the Word, seek the help and illumination of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will reveal areas of your life that need God's transforming grace—areas of which you may not have been aware.

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59 These excerpts are taken from <http://www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/jonathan-edwards-and-the-theology-of-revival-2>, accessed on August 20, 2007.



Psalm 139:23-24

<sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

<sup>24</sup> And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the need for others in the process of applying what you've seen in the Word. Too often our application of the Word falls flat because we've made no provision for putting our application into practice. Although this last principle does not relate to understanding a proper application of Scripture, it does relate to achieving proper application. The accountability and encouragement other believers provide is indispensable. And in sharing what you're learning through the Word, God may challenge and exhort those around you as well!

#### EXERCISE: SUMMARIZE AND APPLY PHILEMON

After studying through a biblical book section by section, there are two steps remaining in the inductive process this curriculum proposes. First, we recommend that you summarize the book. This will help you to draw together what you've learned as you have studied through the book. Summarizing the book also allows you to return to a broader vantage point and to consider, again, what the book as a whole is about. The summary you compose might well serve as the first thing you consult in reviewing your inductive work at a later time.

After summarizing the book in your own words, then think in a focused way about the application of the book's message. Though we encouraged you to remain sensitive to receiving God's Word throughout the inductive study process, this is a time in which you can devote more concentrated effort to applying what you have learned to your own life.

2. Keeping in mind the ten principles you've just covered, first summarize the book of Philemon in a few sentences. Then record some of your initial thoughts about the 21st-century application of this biblical book.

Philemon

<sup>1</sup> Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker <sup>2</sup> and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father

**Summarize and Apply Philemon (20 min):** This exercise is designed to introduce the final two steps in the inductive process. Read the through instructions for this exercise and then allow students to attempt it for about 10 minutes. Then discuss the students' answers for about 10 minutes. The time is too short for a thorough discussion, so focus on introducing the students to these steps in the inductive process. Hopefully, this brief exercise will prepare your students for the longer homework assignment.

Here are some comments on the application of the letter from David E. Garland in *Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), a commentary in the NIV Application series:

“Paul’s letter to Philemon serves as a model of Christian compassion. In many ways, it parallels Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, which captures the gospel in a nutshell. The letter speaks of failure, the need for intercession, returning, forgiveness, and restoration. When we read it side by side with the letter to the Colossians, we learn that getting relationships straight is just as important as getting doctrine straight. If we are genuine disciples of Christ, we will relate to our fellow believers with grace, forgiveness, and encouragement.” (309)

and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, <sup>5</sup> because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, <sup>6</sup> and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. <sup>7</sup> For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. <sup>8</sup> Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, <sup>9</sup> yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup> (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) <sup>12</sup> I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. <sup>13</sup> I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, <sup>14</sup> but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. <sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. <sup>17</sup> So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. <sup>18</sup> If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup> I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. <sup>20</sup> Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. <sup>21</sup> Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. <sup>22</sup> At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

- **ANSWER:** The book of Philemon is Paul’s passionate appeal to Philemon, a former convert of his, on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave. Apparently Onesimus became Paul’s “son” in Paul’s imprisonment and had served him well. Now Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon with the hope that he will be received as a brother in the Lord. The book of Philemon stands as a radical testimony to the love and forgiveness that should exist in the body of Christ. The relationship between believers transcends any earthly and temporal relationship, including that of master and slave. As believers in Christ, we should strive to cultivate communities such as the one envisioned here by Paul.



**Day 1** Now that we've examined the details of the text, paragraph by paragraph, it is time once again to examine the book of Philippians from a bird's eye view. Read the entire book again in one sitting. Then review your previous homework assignments from Lessons 1-5. Think about how you might summarize the book.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapters 38, 39

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 10

**Day 2** Read Philippians again in one sitting. Review your previous homework assignments from Lessons 6-10 and continue to think about how you might summarize the book.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 40

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 41

**Day 3** Write a summary of the book of Philippians in a few short paragraphs. Write another summary of the book in one or two sentences. This shorter summary might be something for you to memorize.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 42

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 43

**Day 4** Using your notes from all previous homework assignments, reflect on the problems involved in applying Philippians to your life. What obstacles do we face in bridging the gap between the first and twenty-first centuries? Record your thoughts.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 44

**Closing (5 min):** Read the section labeled "Homework" in Lesson 11. There is a lot of reading to do for this lesson. Remember that the Further Reading assignments are optional. Field any questions and dismiss the class in prayer.

**Day 5** What would be an *illegitimate* way of applying Philippians? What is the message of the book of Philippians? How is God speaking to you, specifically, through this book? What has he convicted you with this semester? How has he encouraged you and what has he taught you? How has your vision of God been expanded as a result of your study? Record your thoughts on the appropriate application of this book.

**Required Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 46

**Further Reading:** *Living by the Book*, Chapter 12







### Summary of Philippians

**ANSWER:** *The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul when he was in prison in Rome. The church at Philippi is one that he had planted on his second missionary journey, and this letter makes it clear that there was a warm and long-standing relationship between them. The bulk of the letter is spent encouraging the Philippians and urging them to be united and joyful. Paul also informs them of his future plans and gives thanks for the monetary gift that they sent him through Epaphroditus.*

*Encouragement was needed because the Philippians, like Paul, were engaged in conflict and threatened with persecution. It is also likely that they were given to despair because of the presence of Paul's repeated command to rejoice. Paul encourages them by noting the good work that God has begun in them and by celebrating their partnership in the gospel. Even his imprisonment and suffering should not discourage the Philippians, but rather be an occasion for them to grow bolder and rejoice with Paul. Paul holds up himself, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and others in the church as models for their faith. One of the character traits that Paul urges most is humility. Paul points to the example of Christ and exhorts the Philippians to serve one another.*

*This humility will serve in healing the Philippians' clear lack of unity. Not only must the Philippians consider others above themselves, they must all have a clear understanding of the place of Jewish distinctives. Paul has thrown away any racial and religious distinctive, and he urges the Philippians to do the same. This will not lead to a state of perfection in this life, but if their citizenship is in heaven, one day a Savior from heaven will come to raise and transform their lowly bodies. Paul exhorts two specific individuals in the church to get along.*

*At the end of the letter, Paul gives thanks. He is careful to guard against charges of greed or an unhealthy financial dependence, but he is genuinely grateful for their gift. Epaphroditus, the one who bore the gift, is to be commended as well.*

*So it is possible to view the letter to the Philippians as a strange mix between a missionary thank-you letter and a firm exhortation to a divided and suffering church. Paul is operating on several levels throughout the letter, but it is clear that Christ is the center of his message. Christ is their example, their great hope, and their only proclamation. To know him is surpassingly valuable.*

### Two-Sentence Summary of Philippians

- **ANSWER:** *Philippians is a thank-you letter that Paul sends to his friends in Philippi. He exhorts them to stand firm in suffering, to be united, and to rejoice in knowing Jesus Christ.*





### Application of Philippians

*Answer: The key to application is in the author's intention: what did Paul hope to accomplish by writing this letter? Paul's desire was that the Philippians would stand firm, rejoice, and serve each other. He intended that in reading this letter, God would form their beliefs, their attitudes, and their behavior. And this is what should happen when we read too! God wants to encourage and shape us as he did the Philippians.*

*So, for example, consider Philippians 3:20-21: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." In applying this verse we first notice that Paul intends to teach about the certainty of the resurrection of our bodies at the end of the age. This is something for us to believe. The corresponding attitude that is encouraged is eager anticipation of the coming Savior. We should long for Christ's return. It is this attitude that should spill over into the behavior of standing firm (inferred in the next verse) and not imitating those whose end is destruction. As we read this text, we can pray that God would work each of these things in us.*

*But there is more. It is not enough to merely know in what direction we should aim. We also need to know why we are going there and how we can proceed. Another example from Philippians can illustrate this. Consider Paul's command: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:4). This command is certainly something we should try to practice. But if we do it for the wrong reasons or if we try to do this in our own strength, we will certainly fail. But Paul does not leave us with the stark command. He also gives us the motivation and the means by which we are meant to obey. The reason that we should serve others is that it confirms the glorious truth that encouragement in Christ, comfort from his love, and participation in the Spirit meet all my needs and allow me to overflow in meeting the needs of others. Thus, God gets the glory. It also lends testimony to the beautiful example of Christ, who illustrates obedience to this command perfectly. So it is important that we strive to obey Philippians 2:4 in order to glorify God. In order to obey this verse, we need the grace of God working in us (1:6; 2:13) and we need to*

*This answer will by no means be a comprehensive examination of the application of Philippians. Rather, we will only offer a few ideas and give general trajectories.*

*consider Christ's command. Therefore, in applying Philippians 2:4 we must avail ourselves of the means God provides and inform ourselves of the end for which we obey.*

*Behind the vision for the Christian life presented in Philippians is a great vision of a glorious God. This is a God who is sovereign: he works in believers to complete what he has started (2:13; 1:6); he grants both faith and suffering (2:29); he supplies everything we need (4:19). This God provides the righteousness we need (3:9) and guards our hearts and minds (4:7). He is a God, made known in the man Jesus Christ (2:6-7) whose worth surpasses everything else (3:8) and who is worth living and dying for (1:21).*

*Since Paul offers himself as a model of faith (3:17; 4:9), we ought to share in his passion for the advancement of the gospel and his desire for its purity. Our churches ought to be characterized by partnerships for the gospel and the love, unity, and joy to be found in Jesus Christ.*

*So, in summary, the application of Philippians does not happen automatically, nor is it always easy. Rather, we must be intentional and thoughtful in the way we apply the text.*

# Study the Word!

# 12

## § INTRODUCTION

As our final introductory word, hear this exhortation from John Piper. Though originally spoken to pastors with reference to the original languages, it applies to all students of the Bible:

*The life of the church hangs on the word of God (Matthew 4:4). And that inspired word has come to us in the form of a book written in Greek and Hebrew. None of us comes into the world able to read, let alone read Greek and Hebrew. These things must be learned. And they must be learned by study.*

*And even when they are learned, they only become fruitful when used like mining tools to dig out the gold and silver of Scripture. And the only way to dig is to study. The good hand of the Lord was upon Ezra, the Scripture says, because he “had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:9–10). And Paul tells Timothy to be zealous to present himself to God as a work-man who does not need to be ashamed because he rightly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).<sup>60</sup>*

To balance this exhortation, hear also Job, Chapter 28. We can mine for wisdom in God’s Word. But it is God alone who gives it:

*Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold that they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. Man puts an end to darkness and searches out to the farthest limit the ore in gloom and deep darkness. He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives; they are forgotten by travelers; they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro. As for the earth, out of it comes bread, but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires, and it has dust of gold. That path no bird of prey knows, and the falcon’s eye has not seen it. The proud beasts have not trodden it;*

60 John Piper, “The Ministry of the Word,” an online sermon at [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org).

**Prayer (5 min):** During this last opening prayer you may want to thank God for what he has done through the course. Pray that he would make everyone lifelong students of the Word.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment. It might be helpful to begin by discussing the summaries of Philippians that the students have written. About halfway through the conversation, you should return the initial summaries that the students composed in Lesson 1. Ask the students to compare their initial summary to the one they did for homework. What have they learned by doing an inductive study on Philippians? Will they be able to retain the message of the book more effectively now that they’ve studied it?

Then, during your discussion of the application of Philippians, remind the students of the ten principles for appropriate application. If you hear any instances in which a student is inappropriately applying Philippians, gently point it out and show them why it isn’t legitimate application. Take the opportunity to get very personal during this last time of discussion. Focus on how the Lord has transformed them through a close examination of his Word.

*Break (5 min)*

**Mining God's Word (5 min):**

Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 12. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide." When you finish reading the introduction, you may want to pause and again discuss the harmonious relationship between the sovereignty of God and human study.

*the lion has not passed over it. Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light. But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, "It is not in me," and the sea says, "It is not with me." It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire. Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. Abaddon and Death say, "We have heard a rumor of it with our ears." God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. And he said to man, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."*

 LESSON OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, the student should be able to

- ▷ understand how to apply the book of Philippians
- ▷ review and comprehend the entire process of inductive Bible study
- ▷ be exhorted to make inductive Bible study a life-along habit and joy



As the last lesson of the course, this will be an invaluable opportunity to review the inductive study process as we are presenting it. The rationale for leaving this overview until the last lesson is threefold: 1) we didn't want to confuse or discourage students at the beginning of the course with a long and complicated presentation of the process—rather, we wanted to have them immediately looking at the text; 2) by not knowing what was coming next, the students could experience the joy of being surprised and learning as they went; and 3) students would be in a better position to appreciate and discuss the inductive process overview after having done inductive study of their own.

At *Bethlehem College & Seminary*, we want to emphasize that “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.” Therefore, in studying the Bible, we want to emphasize that we read the Bible for our own joy in God, which brings God glory. We hope that this has been clearly communicated during your facilitation of this course.

Because of our pursuit of joy, we would not choose to speak in the following way about our study of the Bible:

*I could plead with you to study the Bible for personal edification; I could try the art of persuasion to stimulate your quest for happiness. I could say that the study of the Bible would probably be the most fulfilling and rewarding educational experience of your life. I could cite numerous reasons why you would benefit from a serious study of Scripture. But ultimately the main reason why we should study the Bible is because it is our duty.*

*If the Bible were the most boring book in the world, dull, uninteresting and seemingly irrelevant, it would still be our duty to study it. If its literary style were awkward and confusing, the duty would remain. We live as human beings under an obligation by divine mandate to study diligently God's Word. He is our Sovereign, it is his Word and he commands that we study it. A duty is not an option. If you have not yet begun to respond to that duty, then you need to ask God to forgive you and to resolve to do your duty from this day forth. (Sproul, *Knowing Scripture*, 31)*

In our minds, this kind of popular sentiment could be read as “grit your teeth and do your duty.” But it is our *duty* to delight ourselves in God. We don’t believe that duty can ultimately be set over and against delight. And it is unlikely that R. C. Sproul thinks that either. J. I. Packer’s blurb on the front cover of *Knowing Scripture* is, “The Bible excites him and his excitement is infectious.” So ensure that your students understand that inductive Bible study should be their duty *and* delight.

The following paragraphs might be interesting to your students. They remind us of the need for inductive Bible study and give a brief description of how the inductive method of Bible study was popularized in its modern form:

*The art and discipline of using the Bible in one’s devotional life is fast becoming a lost habit of the heart, mind, and soul. For those who still do attempt to maintain a regular daily devotional practice, it frequently may involve reading a half page of heavily illustrated comments in a devotional guide printed on very small pages, easily digested in a matter of minutes, and ostensibly centered on a verse, clause, or phrase of Scripture. Unfortunately, the biblical portions, meager as they are, are frequently detached from their scriptural contexts and often reflect little or no connection with the purpose that they originally held in their canonical settings.*

*If this problem is more acute in recent years than before, it certainly is not a new issue for the body of Christ. Near the beginning of this century, Wilbert W. White, founder of a seminary in New York, spotted this same weakness in the Bible reading and study habits of that day. In an attempt to meet that need, he developed what has become known as the inductive method of Bible study. Dr. White’s principal goal was to train readers of the Bible in developing for themselves a way that they could independently gather from the text of Scripture original ideas that would help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Kaiser, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 163-164)*

The final project will provide students with an opportunity to practice inductive Bible study in its fullness. This course, working on Philippians, has been selective in its application of study strategies. But studying a biblical book using the complete methodology will employ all of the strategies throughout the book. So although the work done on Philippians has given the students a taste of inductive study, a comprehensive inductive study on a particular biblical book will happen if the students put into practice what they’ve learned after the course is finished.

## OUTLINE

**Prayer (5 min):** During this last opening prayer you may want to thank God for what he has done through the course. Pray that he would make everyone lifelong students of the Word.

**Discussion (55 min):** Review the homework assignment.

*Break (5 min)*

**Mining God's Word (5 min):** Read the introduction and lesson objectives for Lesson 12. Then proceed through the section labeled "Study Guide."

**Overview of the Inductive Process (30 min):** Read slowly through this section with the students.

**Final Project (10 min):**

**Closing Charge (10 min):** This *Instructor's Guide* does not provide any reference material for the closing charge, so you will need to prepare some remarks of your own. This charge should come from your heart. Exhort your students to make inductive study of the Bible a lifelong habit. Dismiss the class in prayer.







You may have noticed already that this course provided no overview of the inductive process at the beginning of the course. Rather, we have deliberately waited until now, at the end of the course, to explain how we think books of the Bible can be systematically studied.

The following section simply explains what we've done during this course and arranges the steps into one inductive process.

### 📖 OVERVIEW OF THE INDUCTIVE PROCESS

This course was designed to teach you the necessary skills and methodology that you will need in order to study the Bible yourself. Although there is no magic formula for doing inductive study, the following points summarize what we've done in this course and will start you in the right direction.

**Step 1.** Inductive Bible study requires hard work, patience, and concentration. Remember the student and the fish! To devote yourself to this kind of study, set aside substantial blocks of undistracted time.

**Step 2.** We recommend studying entire biblical books if possible. Begin by reading through the book in a single sitting. Repeat this several times, observing every detail that is given about the author, the recipients, and the relationship between the two. From these clues, and any other clues that you can find outside the book, attempt to reconstruct the occasion and purpose of the book.

Please note that the author, recipients, and occasion will not always be easily recognizable. This step will be more productive in some books than others.

**Step 3.** We strongly encourage you to write down all of your observations and ideas. Not only will this discipline force you to be clearer, but it will also provide you with a record of your study that you will benefit from long after you finish. So let your pencil or pen be your second pair of eyes.

**Step 4.** Once you have grasped the basic content and thrust of the book, attempt to discern its structure. Notice major divisions and minor divisions within the

#### Overview of the Inductive

**Process (30 min):** Read slowly through this section with the students. It will provide the students with a comprehensive methodology which they can apply to any book of the Bible. Use this overview as an opportunity to review and summarize what was learned in this course. Make comments and answer questions as needed. It is imperative that the students understand this section because if they don't they will be crippled in using what they learned in this course in further inductive study.

text and constantly ask yourself what the author is doing in each new section. Compose a chart or outline, or otherwise represent the structure of the book.

**Step 5.** After gaining something of an understanding for the book as a whole, begin to study through the book, section by section (as determined by your outline). As you study each section remember the following principles and employ the following strategies:

### Three Principles for Sound Interpretation

1. **Historical Interpretation:** The Bible was written thousands of years ago in a different culture and language. Remember this as you attempt to discern the original author's meaning.
2. **Contextual Interpretation:** The Bible was written in coherent units that often build an argument or develop a theme. Pay attention to what surrounds your focus of study.
3. **Literary Interpretation:** The Bible is a collection of many different literary genres, each with its own "rules" of interpretation. Learn these rules and interpret carefully.

### Ten Strategies for Studying the Text

1. Create a sentence flow.
2. Record your observations.
3. Discern the main point.
4. List relevant questions.
5. Check all the cross-references.
6. Paraphrase the logic.
7. Examine a particular word.
8. Compare different translations.
9. Investigate a biblical theme.
10. Consult secondary resources.

Employ these strategies as you interpret, roughly following the order in which they are listed. It is essential to do your own study before consulting secondary literature! The bulk of your time will be invested in this step, Step 5!

**Step 6.** When you finish studying through the book, section by section, it is helpful to summarize the message of the book in your own words. Assess what you have learned about the book as a result of your study. To this end, it is helpful to write down everything you know about the book before you begin. When you finish summarizing the book at the end of the process, compare your final summary with your initial one.

**Step 7.** Make constant application of what you are learning. It is crucial to first understand the author’s intended meaning before you attempt to “bridge the gap” between the ancient text and your contemporary situation. Let the vision of God presented in the book shape your mind and you heart and your life. Remember the following principles:

**Ten Principles for Appropriate Application**

1. Allow the intent of the original author(s) to inform your application.
2. Focus your attention on what the Bible teaches us about God, and specifically Jesus.
3. Receive God’s Word directly in comparable situations.
4. Derive an enduring principle in situations that are not directly comparable.
5. Look for the means and motivation for obedience.
6. Test your application against other Scripture and the flow of redemptive history.
7. Check your application against tradition and the teaching of your church.
8. Determine if your application promotes love for God and love for others.
9. Pray to God throughout the process of application.
10. Share your application with others for accountability and their encouragement.

**Step 8.** Memorize as much material as you can while you study. Give particular attention to verses that strike you as convicting, encouraging, useful, or otherwise significant. Memorizing the Word will allow you to meditate on it throughout the day and quote it to others in evangelism or for encouragement. Review the verses that you memorize periodically so that you don't forget them.

**Step 9.** Inductive study must be continuously bathed in prayer. God grants insight, understanding, and humility through prayer.

- ▷ So before you start, ask for the Lord's help and guidance.
- ▷ During your study, turn your questions into prayers for illumination and your discoveries into prayers of praise.
- ▷ After you finish, ask the Lord to help you walk by the Spirit in accordance with the Scripture you've contemplated.

**Step 10.** Consider discussing with others or teaching what you are learning. If you have a study partner or participate in a group study, you will certainly benefit from the accountability and encouragement others can provide. If you have the opportunity to teach others (perhaps leading a Bible study), you will be forced to work harder and present your ideas more clearly. Studying the Word does not end in private application. The Word of God must be proclaimed!



### Final Project: A Personal Bible Study Plan

For the final assignment of this course, you must compose a study plan for how you will continue inductive study of the Bible. Structure this plan by answering the following questions (or by devising your own presentation that covers similar material):

1. *Time and Location:* What is the best time of the day and best days of the week for you to study the Bible in a more rigorous and careful manner than “devotional” reading? How long will you be able to study? Where is the best place for you to study?
2. *Subject:* What biblical book would you like to study next? Why this particular book? What do you hope to learn from this book? How long do you anticipate that it will take you to study this book?
3. *Methodology:* What tools and resources will you use to help you study? In what way, if any, will your study of the Bible be different from how you studied the Bible before?
4. *Application:* With whom will you share what you’re learning through your inductive study? Could you teach anyone else what you’ve learned in this class?

Compose thoughtful, paragraph-length responses to each of these questions. Send this assignment to your instructor by mailing it to them or sending it as an email attachment.

**Final Project (10 min):** Review the expectations for the final project. Arrange with the students how this assignment is to be collected, and when. Field any questions.

**Closing Charge (10 min):** This *Instructor’s Guide* does not provide any reference material for the closing charge, so you will need to prepare some remarks of your own. This charge should come from your heart. Exhort your students to make inductive study of the Bible a lifelong habit. Dismiss the class in prayer.

- ▷ *Living by the Book*, Chapters 47 and 48.



# The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz



## Appendix A

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Entomologist Samuel H. Scudder (1837-1911) wrote this account of his first learning encounter with the renowned ichthyologist Dr. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), founder of Harvard University's Lawrence School of Science. The story took place around 1859, was first published (anonymously) in 1873, and has since become a classic lesson in the value of close observation for analysis.



### 📖 THE STUDENT, THE FISH, AND AGASSIZ; BY THE STUDENT

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the scientific school as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

“When do you wish to begin?” he asked. “Now,” I replied. This seemed to please him, and with an energetic “Very well,” he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol. “Take this fish,” he said, “and look at it; we call it a Haemulon; by and by I will ask what you have seen.” With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me. “No man is fit to be a naturalist,” said he, “who does not know how to take care of specimens.”

*[This appendix is reproduced, with modifications, from <http://people.bethel.edu/~dhoward/resources/Agassizfish/Agassizfish.htm>, accessed May 25, 2016.]*

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground glass stoppers, and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge, neckless glass bottles with their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half-eaten by insects and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the professor who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish was infectious; and though this alcohol had “a very ancient and fish-like smell,” I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed, when they discovered that no amount of eau de cologne would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had, however, left the museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view—just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour, I concluded that lunch was necessary; so with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the museum, but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” said he, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet and your bottle corked.” With these encouraging words he added—“Well, what is it like?” He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me; the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body.

When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment: “You have not looked very carefully; why,” he continued, more earnestly, “you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!” And he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor’s criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly, and when, towards its close, the professor inquired, “Do you see it yet?” “No,” I replied. “I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.” “That is next best,” said he earnestly, “but I won’t hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish.”



This was disconcerting; not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be, but also, without reviewing my new discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw. “Do you perhaps mean,” I asked, “that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?” His thoroughly pleased, “Of course, of course!” repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically—as he always did—upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next. “Oh, look at your fish!” he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue. “That is good, that is good!” he repeated, “but that is not all; go on.”

And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction. This was the best entomological lesson I ever had—a lesson whose influence was extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the professor has left to me, as he left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.



# An Extra Copy of the Text of Philippians (ESV)

# B

## Appendix B

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<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. <sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and



continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,<sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,<sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.<sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,<sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.<sup>21</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,<sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.<sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,<sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or questioning,<sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,<sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.<sup>17</sup> Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.<sup>18</sup> Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.<sup>20</sup> For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.<sup>21</sup> They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup> But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.<sup>23</sup> I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me,<sup>24</sup> and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.<sup>25</sup> I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need,<sup>26</sup> for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.<sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.<sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.<sup>29</sup> So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,<sup>30</sup> for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was



lacking in your service to me. <sup>3:1</sup> Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. <sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness, under the law blameless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think other-wise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained. <sup>17</sup> Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. <sup>4:1</sup> Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. <sup>2</sup> I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup> What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. <sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no





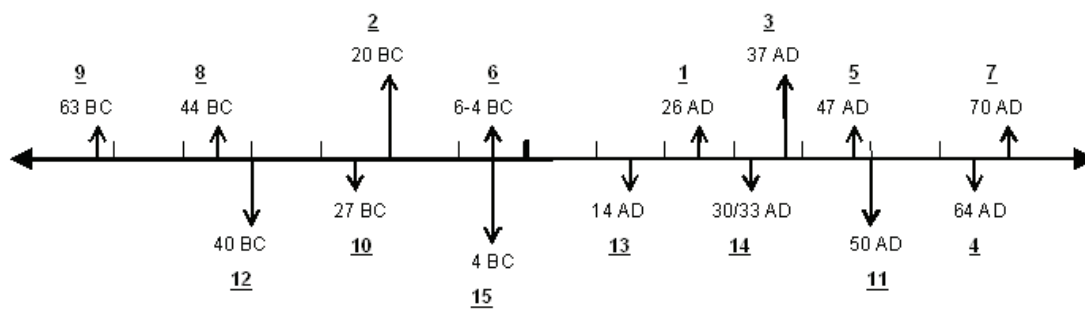
opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. <sup>15</sup> And you Philippians your-selves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup> Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. <sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. <sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



# Old and New Testament Background Exercises

# C

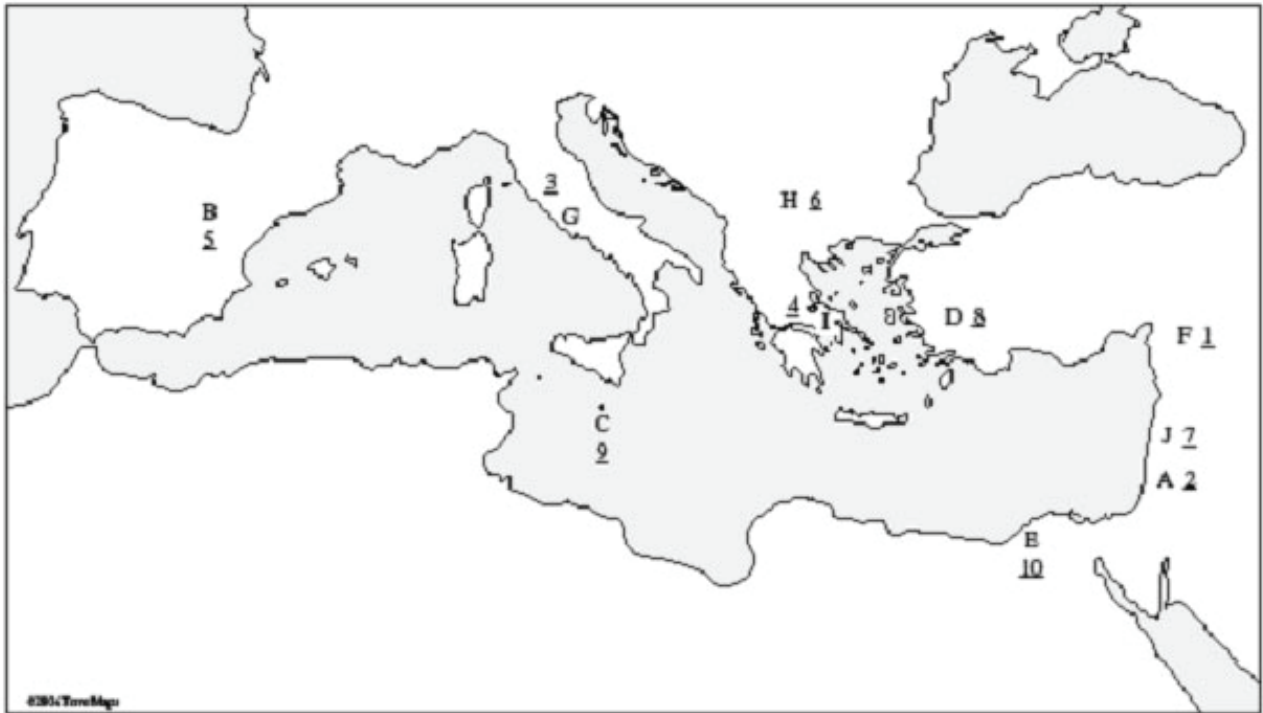
## Appendix C



🔗 EXERCISE: Date the following events by writing each number next to the corresponding date on the timeline above.

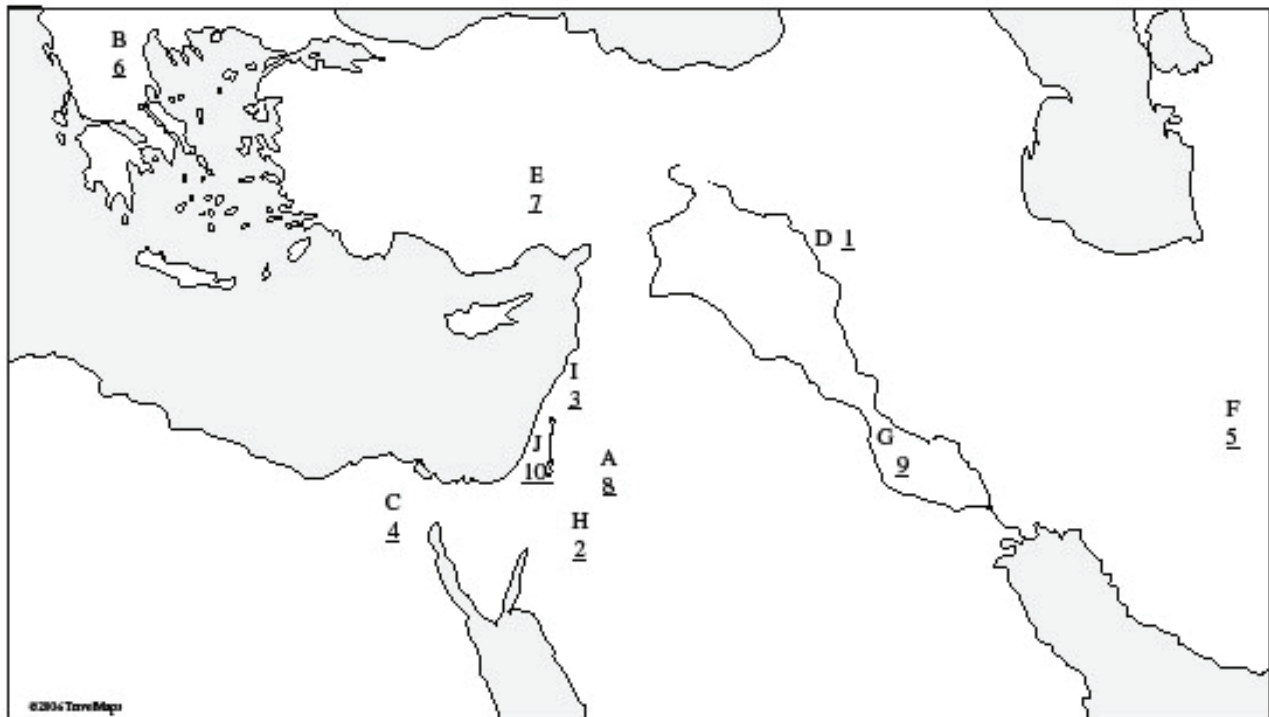
1. Pontius Pilate appointed procurator of Judea
2. Herod begins rebuilding the temple
3. Roman Emperor Tiberius dies
4. Martyrdom of Peter and Paul (approx.)
5. The start of Paul's first missionary journey
6. The birth of Jesus
7. Fall of Jerusalem and destruction of temple
8. Assassination of Julius Caesar
9. Roman general Pompey invades Jerusalem
10. Augustus becomes Emperor of Rome
11. The first New Testament books are written (approx.)
12. Herod crowned king of the Jews
13. Roman Emperor Augustus dies; Tiberius assumes power
14. The death and resurrection of Jesus
15. King Herod dies

Some of these dates are disputed. For a conservative presentation of New Testament chronology, see H. Wayne House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981).



🌀 **EXERCISE:** Match the following geographical descriptions with their location on the map above by writing each number next to the corresponding letter.

1. The hub of Paul's missionary operations and place of his commissioning. **Antioch (Acts 13)**
2. The location of the significant council on Gentile issues. Jerusalem **(Acts 15)**
3. The probable location of Paul and Peter's martyrdom. **Rome**
4. The city of Paul's well-known sermon on the Areopagus. **Athens (Acts 17)**
5. The region that Paul desired the Roman church to help him toward. **Spain (Romans 15)**
6. Paul had a vision urging him to preach in this region. **Macedonia (Acts 16)**
7. The region in which Jesus spent his later childhood. **Galilee**
8. A city in Asia Minor in which Paul spent three years teaching. **Ephesus (Acts 19)**
9. The place to which Paul and others swam after their shipwreck. **Malta (Acts 28)**
10. The native city of Apollos. **Alexandria (Acts 18)**



🌀 EXERCISE: Match the following kingdoms with their location on the map above by writing each number next to the corresponding letter.

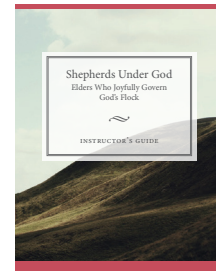
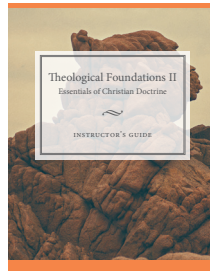
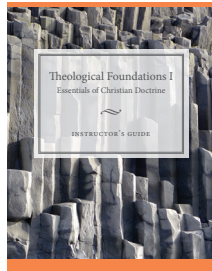
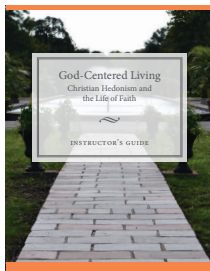
1. This kingdom destroyed Israel in 722 BC. The capitol city was Nineveh. **Assyrians**
2. The people of this kingdom were descendents of Esau. **Edomites**
3. Tyre and Sidon were two prominent cities within this kingdom. **Phoenicians**
4. Israel escaped captivity from under this kingdom in the exodus. **Egyptians**
5. This kingdom ended Israel's exile by defeating the Babylonians. **Persians**
6. This kingdom, prophesied about in Daniel, "Hellenized" the entire region. **Macedonians**
7. An important ancient empire rarely mentioned in the Bible. **Hittites**
8. Ruth came from the people of this kingdom, once subjected to Israel. **Moabites**
9. The people of this kingdom are known as Chaldeans. **Babylonians**
10. Samson and David fought against the people of this kingdom, including Goliath. **Philistines**

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