

STAYING POSITIVE

Part 1: By Having Positive Priorities

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I. MAIN IDEA



Paul's primary theme in this letter is that believers can truly be joyful in all circumstances of life, both good and bad. He places a special emphasis on proper Christian thinking and the right way to respond to life's difficult moments. There is also the theme of church unity. Believers are to stick together, especially when life becomes negative.

Self Test



No.	Question	Yes	No
1	I consistently have a positive attitude about life.		
2	I have friends that I can go to for prayer and support when needed.		
3	My life is organized around a specific set of priorities.		
4	I have specific goals that I am working toward.		
5	I feel that my life is full and has a purpose.		
6	A sense of guilt is not constantly hanging over me.		
7	When I ask God to take care of my concerns and problems, I usually experience immediate peace.		
TOTAL			

II. BACKGROUND

Author: Apostle Paul (A.D. 60)

Bible scholars agree that Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul and not a pseudonymous author. The many personal references of the author fit what is known of Paul from other New Testament books. At the time of this writing Paul was most likely a prisoner in Rome.

Recipients: Christians in Philippi

- Paul and his companions began this church on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40).
- Mostly Greeks but with some converted Jews.
- Congregation was about 10 years old.
- Organized (1:1)...overseers and deacons.
- Probably the only church that sent a gift to him while in prison.

Why Paul wrote this letter

Paul's specific reasons for writing this letter were to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent with Epaphroditus after learning of his imprisonment (1:5; 4:10-19).

However, he makes use of this occasion to fulfill several other desires:

- To report on his own circumstances (1:12-26; 4:10-19)
- To encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances (1:27-30; 4:4)
- To encourage them to live humbly as a united body of believers (2:1-11; 4:2-5)
- To commend Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church (2:19-30)
- To warn the Philippians against the false teachings of Judaizers (legalists) and Antinomians (libertines).
- To plead with Euodia and Syntyche, two Christian women in this church, to resolve their differences (4:2-3)

Key people

- Timothy - Paul's spiritual child (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2), later the apostle's fellow traveler and official representative. His character was a blend of amiability and faithfulness in spite of natural timidity. One must read Philippians 2:19-22 to know how highly the apostle esteemed this young friend. None of Paul's companions is mentioned as often and is with him as constantly as is Timothy.

That this relationship was of an enduring nature is clear from 2 Timothy 4:9, 21. Paul knew that he could count on Timothy. He was the kind of person who in spite of his youth (1 Tim 4:12), his natural reserve and timidity (1 Cor 16:10; 2 Tim 1:7), and his frequent ailments (1 Tim 5:23), was willing to leave his home to accompany the apostle on dangerous journeys, to be sent on difficult errands, and to remain to the very end Christ's faithful servant.

- Epaphroditus - The messenger sent by the Philippian church with gifts to the imprisoned Paul and to care for his needs (2:25; 4:18). On recovering from a serious illness, Epaphroditus longed to return to his concerned flock. Paul highly esteemed him as a "brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier" and sent him back to Philippi with this letter (2:25-30).
- Euodia and Syntyche - (4:2-3) Two women in the Philippian church who were workers for Christ but who had unreconciled relationships with each other.
- Clement - A Christian who labored with Paul at Philippi (4:3). It is uncertain whether he was in Philippi when Paul wrote. Origen identifies him with the church father who afterward became bishop of Rome and wrote a letter to the Corinthian church, but if he is right, Clement must have lived to extreme old age.

III. PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 1

Read Philippians Chapter 1. An outline of this chapter is shown as follows:

- A. Salutation from Paul and Timothy (1:1-2)
- B. Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for the Philippians (1:3-11)
- C. Paul's imprisonment has meant progress for the gospel (1:12-18)
- D. To live is Christ (1:19-26)
- E. Encouragement to walk worthy of the gospel (1:27-30)

IV. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the "good work"(1:6) Paul had in mind here?

2. Why is having proper priorities important in the Christian life (1:10)?

3. How did Paul's predicament (imprisonment) result in the spreading of the gospel (1:12-14)?

4. How would you explain Paul's statement, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (1:21) to a new believer?"

5. What was the internal conflict Paul was describing in 1:22?

6. Why does Paul tell these Philippian Christians to stand firm in the one Spirit (1:27-28)?

7. Group discussion leader's question(s)-optional.

V. PERSONAL APPLICATION



Priorities: Make a short list of the top three most important things in your life. In other words, what things seem to occupy your thoughts and interests most?



After reading Philippians Chapter 1, do you see any changes you'd like to make in these top three priorities? If so, describe these changes in detail.

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Part 2: By Having a Positive Purpose

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I. MAIN IDEA



Purpose is the reason for which something is done.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are to ask yourself, "what is my purpose in doing this?" Is it for my benefit, or is it for God's glory? Having a positive purpose will help you to stay focused on the things that matter most...things that have a high priority (See Part 1).

II. PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

A. The importance of having a common purpose (2:1-4)

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or

vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

B. Our purpose is to be Christ-centered (2:5-11)

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death-- even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

C. Let God's purpose become your purpose (2:12-13)

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

D. Our purpose is to be pure (2:14-18)

"Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me."

E. Two excellent examples: Timothy & Epaphroditus (2:19-30)

"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. 25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for

¹ Pure (2:15), not mixing good with evil. (Thayer 22)

all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me."

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul urges these Philippian Christians to be like-minded (2:2). How can Christians today develop a "like-mindedness" with other Christians?
2. How do verses 2:3-4 help us understand the nature of humility?
3. What is the difference between humility and a poor self-image? (2:5-11)
4. What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" (2:6)?

5. What does it mean to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”? (2:12) Is Paul saying that Christians must work for salvation or else they will lose their salvation? (Hint: see <https://www.gotquestions.org/fear-and-trembling.html>).



6. How is Jesus Christ's attitude evident in the relationship between Epaphroditus and the Philippian Christians (2:25-30)?

7. What purpose did Paul and Timothy have in common, and how does it relate to Christians today (2:19-23)?

8. Group discussion leader's question(s)-optional.

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Briefly describe what you see as your primary purpose in life. How does this purpose relate to Philippians Chapter 2?

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Part 3: By Having a Positive Goal

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I. MAIN IDEA



As believers in Jesus Christ and receiving our righteousness through faith in him (not law-keeping), our goal is to be fully mature by becoming more like him every day.

II. PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3 (NIV)

A. Greeting (3:1)

"Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you."

B. Righteousness comes through faith in Christ, not works (3:2-11)

"Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ 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-- ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ 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; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ 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 ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ-- yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."

C. Press on toward the goal (3:12-16)

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.”

D. Follow our example (3:17-21)

“Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. ¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. ²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. ²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.”

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. (3:12,14) What is to be the believer's goal in life (Hint: see <<https://biblical-christianity.com/the-three-phases-of-salvation>>.
2. How does the believer work toward reaching this goal? (Hint: see Galatians 5:24-25)
3. Is working toward this goal just another form of legalism? Why, or why not?



4. (3:15) Is Paul being prideful by saying, "All of us, then, who are mature"?

5. (3:18) What did Paul mean by "they are really enemies of the cross of Christ"?

6. (3:20) Paul says we are "citizens of heaven," and John tells us that God is preparing a place for believers (John 14:1-2). How can these verses influence the way we see difficult times in this life?

7. (3:20-21) What amazing event does Paul describe which takes place when Jesus returns?

8. Group discussion leader's question(s)-optional.

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Ask yourself, what steps am I taking to ensure I have time for personal, intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ? Do you need to make adjustments to your daily schedule to make sure this happens?

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Part 4: By Becoming a Good Worrier

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I. MAIN IDEA



Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7 NLT)

II. PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 4 (NIV)

A. Paul's exhortations and encouragement (4:1-9)

"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! ² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

B. Paul thanks them for their gifts (4:10-20)

"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have

plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. ¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

C. Final greetings (4:21-23)

"Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²² All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Paul go about helping to resolve the differences between Euodia and Syntyche?

2. What are some recent things that caused anxiety for you (other than the busy Christmas season)?

3. What are some of the underlying causes of anxiety and worry?

4. What is Paul's cure for dealing with anxiety?

5. What is your cure for anxiety (really)?

6. Does simply praying about something automatically take away anxiety? Why or why not?

7. Group discussion leader's question(s)-optional.

IV. FOUR STEPS TO BECOMING A GOOD WORRIER

1. Make a list of everything that you want to worry about.
2. Pick one hour per week to do nothing but worry about the things on your list.
3. Never, under any circumstance, worry before noon or after 5 P.M, Monday through Friday or before 10 A.M. or after 8 P.M. on Saturday, Sunday, or Holidays.
4. Your spouse and other family members are not permitted to worry if you are the designated family worrier. However, if any other member of the family wishes to assume the responsibility as the OFFICIAL WORRIER, you may relinquish this position, but immediately you are disqualified from future worrying. In this event, you must provide the schedule and list of all your worries to the newly appointed family WORRIER. Remember, Only ONE worrier per household is allowed.

V. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Remember that it is God's intent that we experience _____, not _____ (1 Tim. 2:2; John 14:27; 1 Thess. 3:16).
2. Avoid _____ every situation which faces you (Prov. 3:5; 20:24).
3. Don't try to control the _____ (Matt 11:28-30).
4. Think on these things (4:8)

QUALITY	DEFINITION
True	Not deceptive, or pretentious
Noble	Honest, venerable, reverend
Right	To give to God or man what is due him
Pure	Morally undefiled
Lovely	Winsome, sympathetic, something that inspires love
Admirable	Gracious, things that are fit for God to hear
Excellent	Possessing quality
Praiseworthy	That which is clearly from God and deserves praise to Him

5. Practice trusting God until you _____ (1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 55:22; Josh. 1:9).