

## ***Walking With the Father Through Philippians***

*Over the years, I've found my life changing and my faith deepening as I meet with our heavenly Father in His word. This has been especially true as I've been writing these devotionals and having to live what I write.*

*I long for you to be able to say the same as you read through this letter.*

*As I've gotten to know Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John through their letters, I'm overwhelmed by how they were changed by knowing and walking with their Lord. How much they must have longed for us to know Him as they did.*

*As John wrote in 1 John 2:3-6, he wants us to walk as Jesus did and believed that it was absolutely possible to do so. So how did Jesus walk? That's one secret our Father shares with us.*

*Blessings on your time as we take another walk with the Father,*

*Margie Martin*

## ***Walking With the Father Through Philippians***

Paul's letter to the church in the Roman colony of Philippi, modern day Greece, is probably his tenth letter. This city was considered to be the leading city of Macedonia during the first century A.D. Paul visited Philippi on both his second and third missionary journeys.

He wrote this letter during his first Roman imprisonment when he was under house arrest (61-62 A.D.). Be sure to note the difference in the tone of this letter and his second letter to Timothy when he was under arrest the second time and probably awaiting death.

Paul did not find a Jewish synagogue in Philippi, which meant that fewer than twelve Jewish men lived there. Rather, on the Sabbath he went outside the city to a place of prayer by the river. There he spoke to a group of women, including Lydia, Paul's first convert in Europe.

The addition of Timothy's name in the greeting indicates this young man's heart as a pastor and the role that Paul wanted him to take in the early church. On the first visit Silas had had the predominate assistant's role in Philippi.

For the history of this church, see the following passages:

Acts 16:9-40  
Acts 20:6

second missionary journey  
third missionary journey

For more information on this city, see these passages:

Philippians 4:14-19

1 Thessalonians 2:1-3



**New Testament World**

As you spend time in this letter, please take the time to talk with our Father about what He's showing you so you're not just gathering information. As you pray, you can use the space on each page to journal your thoughts or write Him a note.

## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 1:1-2

“Paul and Timothy, servants [bond slaves] of Christ Jesus.”

As I read this greeting, something sounded different, so I looked at Paul’s other greetings:

Romans	Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an <i>apostle</i>
1 Corinthians	Paul, called to be an <i>apostle</i> of Christ Jesus
2 Corinthians	Paul, an <i>apostle</i> of Christ Jesus
Galatians	Paul, an <i>apostle</i>
Ephesians	Paul an <i>apostle</i>
Philippians	Paul and Timothy, <b>servants</b> of Christ Jesus
Colossians	Paul, an <i>apostle</i> of Christ Jesus
1 & 2 Thessalonians	Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians
1 & 2 Timothy	Paul, an <i>apostle</i> of Christ Jesus
Titus	Paul, a <i>servant</i> [bond slave] of God and an <i>apostle</i> of Christ Jesus
Philemon	Paul, a <i>prisoner</i> of Christ Jesus

While we don’t know for sure why Paul addressed the various churches as he did, my guess is that it depended on the issues he had to, or wanted to, discuss with them and the type of relationship he had with them.

The idea of a bond slave is one who chooses to put himself under the authority of another. Jesus, of course, is the prime example of a bond slave because He willingly put Himself under His Father’s authority and came to earth for our sake. With the Philippians, Paul didn’t pull out the big guns, so to speak, of his apostolic authority but rather approached them humbly as a friend and a peer because of his relationship with Christ, his example.

If Paul were to write a letter to you, what type of a greeting would he have to—or be able to—choose? If you chose “apostle,” what do you think you’d need to change so Paul could greet you as a friend? How do you describe yourself in your relationship with God and in extension with those around you?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 1:3-11

*“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight”*

Have you ever wondered what a Christian is supposed to look like? Not physically, of course, but in character and interaction with others? This question is one I often think about. If this is something you want to explore, keep on reading.

I've had the opportunity over the years to rub elbows with men and women who have lived for many years with Christ as Lord. They've put their knowledge into action because they've chosen to believe God's truth and reach out to, be kind to, and encourage others since they've let their own needs be met by their Lord.

Recently I've had the delightful opportunity to know and spend time with young Christians (of all ages). These younger Christians are learning how to use their spiritual gifts, be involved in ministry, and fight our enemy in spiritual warfare. But a big difference exists between those who are young but growing in their faith and those who have lived with Jesus for years and years and “have known him who is from the beginning.” (1 John 2:13-14) And this change doesn't occur overnight.

How does this transition happen? How do we grow from being activity-oriented believers in the service of the King to those who have an internal, abiding knowledge of God the Father that is stable, rock-solid, and rarely wavering—a knowledge that is translated into love for others?

Paul prays for the Philippians that their love for each other and those around them would keep on abounding. They've gone from activity-filled lives that often only bring attention to themselves to lives of knowledge, wisdom, and deep insight that resulted in an amazing love for others; the ability to know what is the best; and a character of purity, blamelessness, and the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22) that reflected the life of Jesus Christ within them—all to the praise and glory of God.

Where are you in this process? Your growth in the faith may not correspond to your actual age. I've seen many senior citizens who choose to stay as young Christians because they don't put the truth of the Scriptures into practice. What will it take to get you to the next level?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 1:12-30

*“Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”*

Isn't it amazing that when something bad happens we think that God isn't in control, so we pray and ask Him to take control of the problem? Perhaps Paul is giving us another view point in this section: that God is in control in the bad times, and He wants to bring good things into being that could happen only through these bad times. For example, from this section, how would the whole Roman palace guard have had a chance to hear the gospel if Paul had not been in prison? (v. 13) And how would the brothers in Christ have been encouraged to speak out freely in the face of conflict if they hadn't seen Paul do so in their midst? Most of us would acknowledge that we get to know God best when we need Him most. So how about spending some time listing circumstances and conflicts you're experiencing today.



Now, thank Him for allowing and even bringing each one of these situations into your life. “Lean” into them, and then ask God to bring good out of them for you and for those around you. But remember, God's good is often different than ours. We think of good as a life of ease, prosperity, a minimum of stress, fun, and good health. God's goal is that we become like Jesus. In the process He can work through us to reach others.

Life's not going to get easier as we walk with Jesus as Lord in this world. Let's begin to encourage each other to see life through God's eyes and let Him change us in our attitudes and actions while we're in our circumstances. He longs to reach us and those around us through what He has us go through.

Ready to make your list and then talk with your Father?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 2:1-11

"... then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

Have you ever noticed that we normally accentuate our differences when we talk with someone instead of seeing how we can agree with each other? It's like one person saying "black" when the other person says "white." In this section, Paul is calling us to be *like-minded* and *one in spirit and purpose*. But, like you, I have my own perspective and set of experiences; therefore, how can we be like-minded with each other? I find I often can't be like-minded with myself two days in a row!

Well, Paul doesn't command us to do something without giving us the "how." He says that we can be like-minded because we have:

- Encouragement from being united with Christ.
- Comfort from His love.
- Fellowship with the Spirit.
- Tenderness and compassion. (v. 1)

And since we have all of this, we are to "do nothing out of

**selfish ambition**

**vain conceit**

*but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests [which of course we have to do], but also to the interests of others.*" (vv. 3-4) [emphasis added]

Our example in this way of living is Christ Jesus Himself. And since He's living in us through the Spirit if we belong to Him, we not only have Him as our example but we also have Him as our source of power, our ability, to live this way when we choose to. The power cord is plugged in, so to speak, but we have to turn on the switch.!

Do you have the nerve to ask Him to show you when you do anything out of selfish ambition or vain conceit? I'll ask if you will.

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 2:12-18

*“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that . . .”*

How did you do with the challenge of asking the Lord to show you when you are operating out of selfish ambition or vain conceit? It’s been a few days since I wrote that question, and I thought I was doing pretty well—until yesterday.

The day started well, especially for a Monday, but whenever I tried to write about today’s section, nothing happened. No words. No inspiration. So I tackled other projects. Then late in the afternoon I got a phone call from a friend offering me a contract job for the fall—but at less than half my normal rate. I was bummed—all evening, through the night, and into the morning.

As I was talking to the Lord the next morning, I realized that what really bothered me was the feeling that He didn’t care enough about me, or think enough of my abilities, to pay me what I thought I was worth. I was hurt. Then I sat down to write today’s section and looked at the passage in my Bible. At the top of the page—in bold—was the heading “Imitating Christ’s Humility.” Ouch.

I read the passage again —first seeing the words selfish ambition and vain conceit and then reading that my attitude was to be the same as Jesus’. Everything came into focus. My next step was to do what the beginning of today’s section said to do:

*work out my salvation:* God is my “boss”; he is responsible for my salary, promotions, where I work, and what I do. God cared for me so much that He rescued me from the kingdom of darkness and settled me in His Kingdom of light. He deserves to be in charge.

*with fear and trembling:* He is God and is on the throne, and my response is to have absolute respect for and humble obedience to Him (both of which He absolutely deserves).

No longer am I to assume the right to complain to or argue with God about what He’s doing since He has the right to do whatever He wants with my life. And what He wants to do with my life is far greater than what I want for myself.

Listen to yourself talk: are you finding yourself complaining or arguing with Him over anything? What’s your next step?

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*Walking With the Father Through Philippians*

**Philippians 2:19-30**

*"For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ."*

Did this verse hit you the way it did me? I don't think Paul is saying that we shouldn't think about our own interests—we have to work hard at our jobs, take care of our families (including our older parents), raise our children, be involved in our local communities, run errands, clean the house, and mow the lawn.

But what does it mean to look out for the interests of Jesus Christ? I'm going to spend a couple of days asking friends what they think. You think about it too, and then let's see what we come up with.



Well, the consensus is that the interests of Jesus Christ is *US!* The redemption of you, me, those who have come before, those around us, and those who are yet to come. But I wonder if what Paul is really getting at is found in the actual words he uses—Jesus Christ.

*Christ:* This is the translation of the Greek word for the translation of the Hebrew word Messiah—the One promised to the Hebrew nation to be their Savior; the One promised in the Law and the Prophets, the Jews' Redeemer.

*Jesus:* While Christ is a title, Jesus is the name of the baby born of a virgin in Bethlehem (as promised) and who died on a cross for our sins (as promised) and who will return in glory (as promised).

And this promised One wants to have an integral part in our lives. And because this promised One took care of the sin issue for us on the cross, He has earned the right to be our Lord—the One in charge.

Are you looking out for His interests in yourself and in others? What could that look like today?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 3:1-11

*"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ"*

Have you ever listed your accomplishments, what you take pride in in yourself: your personality, assets, education, family background, strengths, and abilities? Paul listed his in this section. If there ever was an up-and-comer in the first century, it was Paul.

Then he met the risen Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, on the road to Damascus. And over a period of years, Paul got to know his Lord personally and in the Scriptures. He began to see his own background and abilities in a new light. He began to understand the meaning of the cross and the resurrection. When Paul weighed what he put had confidence in against Jesus Christ, he started to think of his own accomplishments as loss and as rubbish for the sake of Christ. The righteousness (right character, right living) that comes through faith in Christ is far superior to what we can produce on our own. Not at all a balanced scale.



I remember that after I stopped working full-time in a challenging, well-paying job, and people would ask me what I "did," I felt compelled first to mention that I had my own business and then say that I worked part-time as a bookkeeper at a local restaurant. I felt I had to say the more prestigious job first. Then, if possible, I would mention that I had an advanced degree. When the Lord pointed out my pride to me, I had to start switching the order of my activities and not adding my educational training that had happened years ago.

What are you proud of, what is the source of your confidence, what do you hear yourself talking about? What does your scale look like?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 3:12-4:1

*“Not that I already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.”*

Do you have the sense that Christ Jesus has taken hold of you? I sure do. Whenever I hear stories of how people have come to faith, the bottom line is that God sought them out and kept wooing them until they gave in. Then they got the best possible deal in return.

But what Paul is saying here is that he continues to have the sense that Jesus is taking hold of him so that he (Paul) can take hold of what Jesus has for him! What is it that Jesus has out there that Paul is to take “hold of”? The answer may be in the other ways Paul talks about this idea here:

- It’s a prize for which God has called him heavenward. (v. 14)
- It comes with maturity. (v. 15)
- The process is to live up to what we have already obtained. (v. 16)
- The path is the pattern Paul has set for us. (v. 17)
- Our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. (v. 20)

The goal he’s talking about? Well, it’s the transformation of our lowly bodies so they will be like Christ Jesus’ glorious body. And Paul says we are to stand firm in the Lord in this knowledge. We have hope. This here-and-now isn’t all there is to life. Living the life Christ has called us to is worth all the work. What’s here on earth isn’t the best deal around.

You know what I think is really hard to do? Persevere. Not just maintain the status quo, but persevere. Not to become complacent or distracted, but to keep pressing on, pursuing the goal—so we can take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of us.

How are you doing in the challenge of holding on to God’s life for you?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 4:2-9

*“Finally, brothers, 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.”*

I was talking with a single friend last night who was saying that often when she has a conflict with someone that can't easily be resolved, she ignores the problem and continues with life as normal. But we talked about a bitterness that was growing in her heart because of the hurt she had never dealt with. She had chosen to ignore what couldn't be ignored, and it was coming back at her.

Isn't that true for so many of us? We don't deal with our hurtful emotions, and they come back in full force. But look at the commands in this section: “rejoice (always), rejoice!, let gentleness be evident, do not be anxious, present requests to God.” If these commands were easy to do—or natural—we wouldn't have to be commanded to do them, would we? Our natural impulse, however, is to do the opposite: grumble, complain, strike out, be anxious, or ignore the issues, pretending they don't affect us.

I think God is absolutely wanting us to face head-on those things in life that are hard, that hurt, and that make us miserable. But then He wants us to involve Him in the process: to acknowledge that He is near, close by, and cares; and that He is Lord, the One in charge, our Master, the all-powerful One who can do something about the situation.

When we involve Him in our issues, we can then take today's verse and choose to think thoughts that are “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.” Then we will be rejoicing and giving thanks in the midst of a situation—all because the God of the universe is involved and working in us through what we call our problems.

Does this come easily or happen quickly when the pressure's on? Absolutely not! But we can choose to bring our risen Lord into the battle instead of ignoring the hurt. As we include Him, our feelings catch up with our choices.

What's going on in your life today that our Lord wants to be involved with? Perhaps He's brought it around or at least permitted it to be in your path so you'll reach out to Him in new ways and with a new depth of understanding. It's time to invite Him into your hurts and hurtful ways of thinking. What can you lose?

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 4:10-20

*“They [the gifts the Philippians sent to Paul] are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”*

If you're like me, you write out your check on Sunday mornings and drop it into the offering basket. Or you write out a check to a ministry during the week and pop it in the mail (or send your donation using online banking). But, Paul says that these gifts are

a fragrant offering  
an acceptable sacrifice  
pleasing to God

Do you think of your monetary gifts this way? I didn't until a couple of months ago when something I read suggested that I pray as I write out a check to our local church or to a missionary. So I started asking God to use the gift for His glory, to bless and encourage those who will make use of the money. Now my check writing is becoming an act of worship.

Paul says something else that's interesting in this section concerning giving: “Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.” (v. 17)

It almost seems that we have an account in heaven, and as we give, this account begins to fill—probably along with our “good deeds” that are done in faith. Wow! This means that when we're at the judgment seat of Christ, we'll be able to stay there for an even longer period of time reviewing with Him what we did in faith—and I want to be there for hours and days and years (oh right, there's no “time” in heaven).

How about you? Is your account of good deeds and joyful giving getting bigger and bigger as you're learning to worship this way? Have you ever thought that perhaps worship isn't just feeling good as you sing praise songs on Sunday mornings? Perhaps worship is actually how we live and give during the week. Sunday mornings while we sing with other believers, then, become like icing on the cake.

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## Walking With the Father Through Philippians

### Philippians 4:21-23

*“All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar’s household.”*

As a child in Vacation Bible School, I learned that a church was not a building but it was the people. As I grew older though, I saw many churches, or groups of people, all seeming to think of themselves as very important and others as less important.

When I became a Christian, I attended a church where the pastors understood and taught the truth from Ephesians 5 that *all believers* are the Church, the Bride of Christ, and that Christ is the Head of His Church. This truth was so clear to them and the elders that the sign out front on the street had the name of the church on it—Peninsula Bible Church—and below the name, in smaller letters, were the words “Meets Here.” Another way they lived out this belief was by having only the elders as members of our church. The sense I got from the sign and from church membership was that we were one local body that met at this particular location, but our real membership was in Christ’s Church—all over the world and for all times.

So when I read the verse for today’s section, my heart was warmed thinking of these two groups of saints—those in Philippi and those in Rome—caring for each other because of their common walk of faith. Most of them would never meet this side of glory since they lived hundreds of miles apart, but their hearts were knit together.

How do you feel toward believers in other centuries, countries, denominations, or churches? Are they enemies, distant memories, or fellow saints and brothers and sisters? Since God is powerful enough to reach into even the homes of our enemies with the love of Christ (example, Caesar’s household), who would want to miss out on what God is doing anywhere else?

What is your attitude toward those who worship elsewhere and in other ways? Do you feel a connection with believers in other countries and of different nationalities? What would Jesus say about your feelings?

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