



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Philippians Lesson 12: Philippians 3:21-4:7

This week is where the rubber meets the road. After spending a few chapters discussing the root of the problem in Philippi and giving examples of how to behave, Paul finally addresses the exact issue that this congregation was dealing with. Remember as we read through this section the chapter breaks are a later edition. This would have been written as one cohesive letter with no breaks.

Read Philippians 3:20-4:1

Where does Paul say they have citizenship?

Why might this emphasis on citizenship have been impactful to them?

What privileges come with citizenship?

Who does Paul say they are waiting for?

What will Christ do according to verse 21?

How will He do this?

What is “therefore” in Philippians 4:1 referring back to?

What does Paul call the members of the Philippian church in 4:1?

What does Paul ask the Philippian church to do in 4:1?



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Paul is making one last appeal to their attitude here before dropping the massive bomb in Philippians 4:2. He reminds them that they are citizens of heaven with a higher calling. This focus on citizenship would have been particularly impactful for them because they were citizens of Rome and they understood what a privilege citizenship was.

“Therefore” in 4:1 refers back to our citizenship being in heaven. Paul is saying to them, since our citizenship is in heaven, stand firm! One of the things that can cripple the most stalwart Christian is strife and disharmony in the church. It can be incredibly wearying. Paul understands this and encourages them to keep a singular mindset on heaven and don’t let their faith budge.

In addition to this, notice how Paul really focuses on his love for them in 4:1. This is such an important backdrop for what is about to take place. He is about to get very personal and pointed, but before he does, he wants to remind them that he loves them dearly. Every correction he makes is because of his desire to see each one of them in heaven.

How can a focus on our heavenly citizenship help us endure and work through struggle and strife within our congregations?

Think about the ways Paul refers to the people in the Philippian church. Do you view your fellow Christians with such tenderness?

How can you work to shift your mindset toward your brothers and sisters in Christ to be more like Paul’s?

Read Philippians 4:2-3

Think back to Lesson 3 (or look back at it if you need to). What are the three petition verbs used in this passage?

What is the significance of a petition verb?

Which two women were having trouble getting along?



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What does Paul say about these women in verses 2 and 3?

Who does Paul ask to help these women?

These verses are honestly some of the most humbling in all of Scripture. Can you even imagine!? You are sitting there listening intently to a letter from Paul himself, nodding your head at all of his valid points, and all of the sudden BOOM! Your own name is read out loud in front of everyone! Ouch! At the outset this might seem like overkill. Paul addresses tons of serious and pointed issues throughout his letters and doesn't usually attach names to them. Why in the world would he do so now?

Take a minute and read 1 Corinthians 4:17, keeping in mind that the "temple of God" referred to in this passage is the church. Paul gives a pretty scathing warning here. The one who is guilty of dividing the body of Christ and "destroying the temple of God" has a terrifying punishment. Paul says God will destroy Him. It is an incredibly serious thing to sow discord and strife within the body of Christ. There is nothing that can damage the influence of God on this earth more than division and ugliness going on within the church. We don't know

exactly what was going on between these two women, but it is clear that it was causing enough strain on the congregation that Paul felt it imperative to address it head on.

It shouldn't surprise you that the phrase "live in harmony" is literally "be of the same mind." Sound familiar? Think back to Philippians 1:27, 2:2, and 2:20, and really throughout the entire letter, Paul has put emphasis on having the same mind, focused on God's vision. We see in Philippians 4:3 that these women were not just idle busybodies, they were workers who served diligently in the church. Paul loves them dearly and begs them to put their differences aside and remember their common goal.

Paul doesn't just leave it at that though. Sometimes working through our own baggage and dealing with personal contentions is incredibly difficult because you are so wrapped up with emotions. When we see people embroiled in these emotional battles, we usually have one of two responses. We either take sides and add to the strife or we avoid the conflict altogether, keeping the combatants at arm's length. Paul advocates for a completely different approach. He begs for the congregation to get involved and help these women work through this situation.

Really process this, think about how difficult this would be. This isn't an easy thing Paul is asking them to do. Best case scenario, there is a very tense sit-down with



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these two women, and they both really want to put this strife behind them and set their minds on the important mission at hand. Worst case scenario...well...we've all been around enough to know how this situation could easily explode in so many ways. That doesn't change Paul's request. He cares for these women's souls, and he expects others to care enough for them to do what is necessary to see them in heaven, no matter how uncomfortable.

Time to take stock and really search your heart. Do you harbor resentment or hurt feelings for another brother or sister in Christ?

Is there a member of the church that you are currently at odds with?

What are some ways you can work toward repairing your relationship with this person this week?

Do you know brothers or sisters in Christ who are currently in a contentious situation?

How can you work toward helping them repair their relationship this week?

Read Philippians 4:4-6 (and remember the context hasn't changed!)

What is Paul's command and familiar refrain in Philippians 4:4?

Look back through Philippians and see where rejoicing is discussed. What is the general focus of the rejoicing and how does that pertain to the issue at hand?

What command does Paul give in Philippians 4:5?

How might this be connected to the situation at hand?

What two commands does Paul give in Philippians 4:6?



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How are these connected to the context of chapter 4?

Some of the most well-known quotes in all of the Bible come from Philippians 4; they are also some of the most misused verses in the Bible. As you are reading through a letter like this, always remember that the Bible is not a book of notable quotes, one-liners, and memes. Each book or letter is written with a purpose and that purpose connects it together. Paul makes some statements here that can seem like random wise proverbs scattered around, but upon closer examination we can see how they connect.

There are four commands in these verses that come directly after Paul addresses his “true companion” and asks him to help in this situation with Euodia and Syntyche. These commands seem to be aimed at him, Euodia and Syntyche, along with the entire congregation.

First, they are to “rejoice in the Lord.” This letter has been filled with a focus on rejoicing even in the midst of difficult situations. If God’s will is being done, we should rejoice in it, no matter our personal circumstances. This congregation needed to do the difficult work of addressing the situation between these two women and these women were going to have to do the

difficult thing and humble themselves in order to get along. This entire situation is uncomfortable all the way around; however, God’s will is being done and in this every person involved should rejoice.

The second command is “let your gentle spirit be known.” The word gentle here (EPIEIKES) literally means to be yielding and not insisting that you are right. You can imagine how quickly this attitude would diffuse a contentious situation, especially if everyone involved worked to embody this attitude.

The last two commands here are “be anxious for nothing” and “let your requests be made known.” I don’t know about you, but I cannot think of anything more terrifying on this planet than conflict. I will make myself physically ill if I get a wiff that there might be a reason for strife in a situation I’m involved in. Paul understands that it isn’t going to be easy unwrapping this issue, but it is so important. He wants them to remember as long as their goals are in line with God’s, it will be okay! There is nothing to be anxious about, especially if we are bathing the situation in prayer.

Finally verse seven gives us the outcome of following these commands: “the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” How do we find peace when in the midst of a situation like this? It isn’t to ignore it until it festers. It is to address it head on with a gentle spirit and godly focus, laying our anxiety at Jesus’s feet.



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Have you ever been involved in strife between people that has caused you stress and anxiety?

Which of these four commands could you have done better with in that situation?

How would these commands have helped the situation?

Which of these commands do you find most difficult? Why?

What are some ways you can work on building your spiritual muscles in these particular areas this week?
