

Reading other folks' mail is not usually a good idea, but reading Paul's letter to his dear friends in Philippi is most certainly a *very* good idea! Not only do we have the counsel of God given to us through His apostle Paul, but we also can benefit greatly by listening in to the way Paul relates to his friends and collaborators, the way he copes with hard circumstances and difficult people, and the way he looks at life and at himself. And we can see how Paul exhorts his dear friends.

But, as Gordon Fee points out in his commentary *Philippians*, the friendship represented here “is only part of the story and, in some ways, the least significant part. For in Paul’s hands everything turns into gospel....Most significantly, friendship in particular is radically transformed from a two-way to a three-way bond between him, the Philippians and Christ. And obviously it is Christ who is the center and focus of everything. Paul’s and their friendship is predicated on their mutual participation/partnership *in the gospel*.”

Fee goes on to suggest that one could diagram this three-way relationship as a triangle, with Christ at the top point and Paul and the Philippians at opposite points on the bottom line of the triangle, with the words “The Gospel” in the center of the triangle. He goes on to say “The gospel for Paul is ultimately all about salvation (1:28) which comes from God and is effected by Christ and made effective by the Spirit.” This emphasis is good to keep in mind as you delve into this book, looking at the various themes and ideas presented.

As we have a chance to learn of God’s love and faithfulness by looking back to see Him at work in the lives of real people of the past, let’s also look forward with anticipation to how He’ll work in our lives today. *Tell Him* now that you want to know Him more intimately and that you want to grow into His likeness as you study this personal and potent letter. As you see the beauty of Christ’s life and as you become more like Him, you will be bringing the good news of the gospel to a hurting world. You will shine! (Philippians 2:15).

NOTE: The purpose of Bible study is to know God by understanding His mind as revealed in His Word. We want to see what the Bible *really* says. Therefore, it’s important to use an accurate, readable *translation* for Bible study. The New American Standard Bible and New International Version are both excellent. The Amplified, Living Bible, Phillips and The Message are paraphrases and as such impose man's point of view on the text, and do not necessarily come from the original language. Please, if you want to read these, do so *after* you have studied.

## PHILIPPIANS

Letters are meant to be read all the way through.

Read Philippians through three times. As you read be thinking about questions 1-4.

1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ 3)\_\_\_\_\_

1. What are some of the main themes or ideas you discovered in your reading?  
(Remember that the way to discover this is by paying attention to repetition of words, phrases or ideas. Especially note where "the gospel" is mentioned.)
2. What were Paul's circumstances?
3. What were the recipients' circumstances?
4. Why did Paul write the letter? (You'll probably find more than one reason stated or implied in your reading.)

Read Acts 16:11-40. Do this twice. 1)\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_

5. Acts 16 has given you some additional New Testament background with which to approach the book of Philippians. What facts did you uncover that might be useful in understanding this book?

6. As you read the letter to the Philippians and the passage in Acts what is one truth you saw which you can apply to your life? (Maybe it will be a promise to claim, a command to obey or an example to follow.)

7. Why did you choose that particular truth?

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