

STUDY 1. NOTES FOR LEADERS

Philippi was a Roman Colony with a spotted history. The letter was probably one of the last to be written by Paul and was probably written from Rome in the years 60-62. Some Holman Dictionary notes on Philippians are also enclosed to give you further background.

UNDERSTANDING THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

1. a. What, to you, are the characteristics of a great church?
b. Have you ever been a part of a “great church”?
2. **Read Philippians 1:3-11.**
 - a. What does Paul say about this church?
 - b. What clues does he give about his own situation?

Note that the theories vary as to where Paul was when he wrote the letter (Ephesians? Rome? etc) but the weight of the evidence is that he was near the end of his life in Rome and was under house arrest.

3. **See Philippians 1:3, 1:8, 2:12, 4:1.**
 - a. What type of relationship is there between Paul and the Church?
 - b. Can you guess why Paul got on well with this church and not with others?

Note how positive this letter is. This was not always the case with other churches. See for example, 1 Corinthians 1.10ff, Galatians 1.6 ff. There are inherent problems existing in the Philippian Church but there is also a powerful bond between the congregation and its apostolic leader. The Philippian Church may not have had inherent problems of a Jewish/Christian division because it would have been predominately gentile from the beginning. However, as we will discover, a Jewish problem was beginning to emerge. There may have been some ex army types who were used to a chain of command. There may have also been local leadership that led them in a positive and helpful way.

4. **See Philippians 1:7.**

There is a key word in this verse that is repeated in different forms in Philippians 2:1, 3:10, 4:14. You have heard the Greek word for this many times. It is *koinonia*, which is translated as fellowship.

 - a. In what ways has our church worked hard on creating “fellowship”?
 - b. What is the difference between knowing a person’s name and the concept of fellowship?
 - c. Where does Paul’s idea of fellowship differ from just getting to know a person well?

Note the use of the word “share.” At times in this letter it carries the idea of generosity but it is more than that. True fellowship is more than “chit chat” or enjoying another person’s company. Paul goes one step further and speaks of sharing both the good and the bad. It is the deepest level of support.

5. a. Can you name a friend or friends who went with you through some horrible times? In what sense is that fellowship? What difference did it make?
b. Do you have many friends that you can actually “share” with? What difference does that make?

6. **See Philippians 2.1.**

Note that Paul speaks of “sharing in the Spirit”. What do you think he means by that?

This could mean sharing that is inspired by the Spirit or sharing about spiritual things. Regardless of the way it is translated you are speaking, in a Christian context, of a sharing that goes beyond a normal friendship. Note the verses and how Paul’s use of “sharing” differs according to the context. Sometimes it is used of his relationship with God and at times of his relationship with others.

*“It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you **share** in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” (Philippians 1:7, NRSV).*

*“If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any **sharing** in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy...” (Philippians 2:1).*

*“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the **sharing** of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).*

*“In any case, it was kind of you to **share** my distress” (Philippians 4:14).*

7. Imagine what type of people would have made up the church for Paul to think this way of them. Do we have people in our church like that?

8. **See Chapter 1:9-11.**

If Paul were writing to the Doncaster Church, how would he complete the following sentences?

a. I thank God for you because

b. I pray for you so that