

# Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

*Philippians:  
A Choice to Rejoice*

## Lesson 8: Sent to Serve

### Bible Text

Philippians 2:19-30

### Memory Verse

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom should I send? Who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)

### Word List

**affirmed:** said that something was true in a confident way

**communicate:** to get someone to understand your thoughts or feelings by talking, writing, or some other means

**sacrifices:** acts of giving up something you want to help someone else

**prophet:** one of the early preachers who spoke for God

In college, I studied in Europe for a few months. It was a great experience for me. I travelled to several countries. I visited important places. I saw the Eiffel Tower. I saw the town where Shakespeare lived. I visited the battlefields of World War I. I learned a lot from my trip. I ate new foods and met new people. I had new experiences. The time I

spent studying abroad helped me grow in many ways.

To go on this trip, I had to leave my family and friends. At that time, there was little access to email. There were few cell phones. There was no texting. The only ways to keep in touch were phone calls or letters. International phone calls were very expensive. And letters or postcards took a long time to reach home. Things are quite different today. Text, email, and video calls can instantly connect people around the world. But those things did not exist 25 or 30 years ago. And they certainly did not exist during Bible times.

When the church at Philippi began, things were quite different than they are today. It was hard to **communicate** with people far away. This had to be done by writing letters. There were no computer printers or typewriters. These letters were handwritten. There were no cars or airplanes to carry mail. These letters were carried by hand from place to place.

Paul helped begin the church at Philippi. Then he did not see the Philippians for a very long time. It was many, many years. He could not call, email, or text them. But he wanted the church to know that he remembered them. He wanted to share words of encouragement with the church. He wanted

to remind the church that they were important to him. So he wrote a letter to them. He sent two special messengers to them. These messengers delivered Paul's letter. And Paul also wanted these messengers to minister to the Philippians.

**A Friend to Paul  
(Philippians 2:19-23)**

**19 I hope by the help of the Lord Jesus that I can send Timothy to you soon. It will comfort me when he brings news about you.**

**20 I have no one else who is as interested in you as Timothy.**

**21 Everyone else thinks of himself instead of Jesus Christ.**

**22 You know how Timothy proved to be such a true friend to me when we preached the Good News. He was like a son helping his father.**

**23 I hope to send Timothy as soon as I know what they are going to do to me.**

Paul wanted to visit the Philippians himself. But Paul could not visit the Philippians because he was a prisoner in Rome. He was waiting for his trial to begin. He did not know how long he would remain a prisoner. He did not know if he would ever be able to visit Philippi again. Still, he wanted to know how things were going at the Philippians' church. So Paul made a plan.

Paul decided to send his friend Timothy to visit the Philippians. Paul trusted Timothy. Timothy cared deeply about the Philippians (v. 20). He would go to Philippi. He would learn what was happening in the church. He would take Paul's message. He would encourage them by preaching the Good News. Later, Timothy would return to Paul with news about the Philippian church. This would be a great comfort to Paul (v. 19).

**A Faithful Servant  
(Philippians 2:24-27)**

**24 I hope by the help of the Lord that I can come soon also.**

**25 I thought it was right that I send Epaphroditus back to you. You helped me by sending him to me. We have worked together like brothers. He was like a soldier fighting beside me.**

**26 He has been wanting to see all of you and was troubled because you heard he was sick.**

**27 It is true, he was sick. Yes, he almost died, but God showed loving-kindness to him and to me. If he had died, I would have had even more sorrow.**

**28 This is all the more reason I have sent him to you. When you see him, you will be glad and I will have less sorrow.**

Paul planned for Epaphroditus to go to Philippi with Timothy. The Philippians sent Epaphroditus to Paul when they heard he was in prison. The Philippians loved Paul deeply. That is why they sent Epaphroditus to be Paul's helper. Epaphroditus became very sick on his visit to help Paul (v. 26). Epaphroditus did not want the Philippians to worry about him. He did not want them to doubt his faithfulness to ministry. Paul **affirmed** that Epaphroditus was healthy, well, and serving strongly alongside him.

Paul called Epaphroditus a "brother" (v. 25). Paul described him as "a soldier fighting beside [him]" (v. 25). Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that Epaphroditus was a faithful servant. "Working together" with Epaphroditus brought Paul much joy (v. 25). Even though he was sick and far from home, Epaphroditus served God by helping Paul. Both

Epaphroditus and Timothy set fine examples for Christians to follow.

### A Joyful Welcome (Philippians 2:29-30)

**29 Take him into your church with joy. Show respect for men like him.**

**30 He came close to death while working for Christ. He almost died doing things for me that you could not do.**

Paul gave the Philippians a command concerning Epaphroditus. Paul told them to "take him into your church with joy" (v. 29). Paul wanted them to give Epaphroditus a warm welcome. He wanted the Philippians to show honor and "respect" to Epaphroditus (v. 29). They should embrace him when he returned.

Paul felt strongly about Epaphroditus. He shared these feelings with the Philippians. He wanted them to understand how Epaphroditus had risked his life. He wanted them to understand the **sacrifices** Epaphroditus made on their behalf. Paul's instructions remind all Christians to honor and respect those who minister to others.

### Things to Remember

Paul travelled to Philippi to help start a church there. Epaphroditus travelled from Philippi to Rome to minister to Paul. Timothy

### Things to Think About

1. What are your favorite ways to communicate with friends and family who are far away?
2. What made Timothy a valuable friend to Paul?
3. Which of Epaphroditus' qualities do you most admire?
4. In what ways can you show honor, respect, and support for those who minister to others?
5. Where do you think God wants to send you to minister to others?

would travel from Rome on Paul's behalf to minister to the Philippians. These are strong examples of ministry for Christians to follow today.

However, Christians today do not need to travel long distances to minister to others. Each day, Christians are surrounded by chances to encourage others and meet their needs. A Christian can simply walk next door or go across the street to share a meal or a kind word with someone. A Christian can just step into the office of a co-worker to listen or pray. A Christian does not even have to leave her house in order to engage in ministry. She can send a Bible verse to encourage someone via text, email, or direct message. She can pick up a cell phone and call to check on someone from her car. These are simple acts of ministry.

God wants to send Christians to minister everywhere. Are you looking for places to go in the name of Jesus? Are you willing to go? Ask God to give you a heart like the **prophet** Isaiah's. When God asks, be ready with Isaiah's reply: "Here I am. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).

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