

# connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

# Pure Joy

## A CHOICE TO REJOICE

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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*Pure Joy: A Choice to Rejoice (A Study of Philippians)*  
*Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect With Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session

can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)

6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

**Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online.** Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail [baptistway@texasbaptists.org](mailto:baptistway@texasbaptists.org) to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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***FREE!*** Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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# Pure Joy: A Choice to Rejoice

## A Study of Philippians

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Writers for This Teaching Guide</i>	7

### DATE OF STUDY

LESSON 1	_____	<b>The Joy of Community</b> PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11	12
LESSON 2	_____	<b>A Choice to Rejoice</b> PHILIPPIANS 1:12-19	24
LESSON 3	_____	<b>To Live Is Christ</b> PHILIPPIANS 1:20-26	37
LESSON 4	_____	<b>Standing Firm</b> PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30	50
LESSON 5	_____	<b>United in Spirit</b> PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4	62
LESSON 6	_____	<b>The Great Example</b> PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11	74
LESSON 7	_____	<b>Working Out Your Salvation</b> PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18	86
LESSON 8	_____	<b>Servant Leadership</b> PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30	96
LESSON 9	_____	<b>Count It All Loss</b> PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11	106
LESSON 10	_____	<b>Press On</b> PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16	116
LESSON 11	_____	<b>Our Citizenship in Heaven</b> PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21	128

<b>LESSON 12</b>	<b>Rejoice in the Lord Always</b>	140
	PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9	
<b>LESSON 13</b>	<b>It Is Well With My Soul</b>	151
	PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23	
	<i>Prayer for Pure Joy</i>	162
	<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>	163
	<i>Ministry Promotions</i>	166

Focal Text

Philippians 1:1-11

Background

Ephesians 1:15-23

# lesson 1

## The Joy of Community

### MAIN IDEA

Circumstances do not dictate the quality of joy we, as believers, have in Christ.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What is the difference between spiritual fruit and religious activity?

### TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to understand that true Christian fellowship is much more than having their names on the church roll



# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

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Acts 16:11ff records the remarkable experiences the apostle Paul and Silas had when they founded the church at Philippi. Their work began quietly when they arrived in the city and found a group of Jewish and God-fearing women gathered by a river to pray. It ended explosively with an earthquake and city officials begging Paul and Silas to leave!

Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians during a prison stay. We don't know where or when it was. Many scholars suggest he was in Rome, while others contend, he was in Caesarea or Ephesus.

Paul experienced imprisonment while in Philippi. He and Silas were arrested after being falsely accused of stirring up insurrection against Rome. The authorities had them stripped and severely flogged. Flogging was a severe and painful punishment. Then they placed them in the innermost part of the prison and put their feet in stocks.

Their pain from their flogging wounds and discomfort from being in the stocks had to have been unbearable. Nonetheless, Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise to God late into the night. While they were singing, an earthquake struck. The Philippians would have remembered the way in which Paul was joyful despite his circumstances.

The apostle appears to have written this letter for at least two reasons, both of which are reflected in this lesson's text. First, to encourage the Philippians as they faced difficulties in serving Christ. Second, to address problems within their congregation. One of the greatest of these was conflict prompted by pride and overconfidence.

These concerns remain for us Christ followers today. We search for peace and joy, often finding them elusive. Furthermore, we sometimes struggle with our fellow Christ followers, feeling we are not getting the appreciation we deserve.

The apostle deals with these issues in our text. He said to those searching for peace and joy that they find them in their relationships with God,

not their circumstances. He said to those who feel unappreciated that they should focus on showing Christ's sacrificial love to others by serving them. By doing so they will find great joy.

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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### Introduction (1:1-2)

**1:1.** In Paul's time, people put their names at the beginning of their letters. This was a good arrangement because people could tell immediately who wrote the letter.

The two names at the beginning of this letter are Paul and Timothy. Most likely, Timothy was with Paul, but did not contribute content to the letter. Younger than Paul, Timothy was one of his closest and most trusted coworkers. Timothy's first appearance is in Acts 16:1ff. He joined Paul at Lystra and assisted him from that point onward in his missionary journey. The Philippians would have been familiar with Timothy because he was with Paul when the apostle planted the church in their city (Acts 16:12-13).

Paul identified himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus." The word he used for "servant" literally means "slave." It was a humble way to refer to himself and showed the depth of his commitment to Christ. He served Christ, but beyond that he had bound himself deeply to Him. Christ owned him.

Paul addressed the letter to "all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi." The Greek text refers to them as the "saints" or "holy ones." The root meaning of "holy" is to be set apart. God had set the Philippians apart for Himself through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"In Christ Jesus" is an important concept in Paul's writings. Being in Christ was more than belonging to Him. It was to be enveloped by Him. It was also to be bound to Christ's people, who themselves were in Him.

The apostle referred to two groups of church officers: overseers and deacons. The New Testament uses three words to describe authorities or leaders in the church: overseers (*episcopos*), deacons (*diakonos*), and elders

(*presbuteros*) (see 1 Timothy 3:2-7, 8-10; Acts 11:29-30). Though we have qualifications for deacons and overseers, we do not have job descriptions. For this reason, we do not know precisely how they functioned in the church. Many scholars feel “overseer” and “elder” describe the same office. They also think they were the same as the modern pastor. But this is far from certain.

**1:2.** This is a standard blessing in many of Paul’s letters. We must first experience grace if we’re to know peace with God. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict. It is also wholeness and reconciliation in our relationships with God and others through the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Jesus” referred to His identity as the earthly Jesus of Nazareth. “Christ” referred to His identity as the Messiah, God’s Anointed One sent to rule His kingdom. “Lord” referred to His authority to rule over God’s kingdom.

### Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

**1:3.** Paul’s fond memories of the Philippians always evoked feelings of thanksgiving. He was grateful for all God had done through them.

**1:4-6.** This was the first time the term “with joy” appears in Philippians. Joy and unity are the two dominant themes of this letter.

Paul always prayed with joy for them because of their partnership in the gospel from the first day he came to be with them to the present. This joy encouraged him while he was suffering terribly in prison.

“Partnership” translates the Greek word *koinonia*, which refers to a close sharing in common. Acts 2:42 identifies it as one of the great qualities of the early church. The early church expressed this partnership tangibly by giving to each other according to their needs. The Philippians had done something similar for Paul by sending a gift to encourage him (Philippians 4:10ff).

Their partnership was in the gospel. Our word “gospel” comes from an old English term “God Spell.” A “spell” was a story, so a God Spell was a story about God. It was a story of good news. The Greek word translated “gospel” is *euangelion*, which is the root for our word “evangelism.” We do evangelism when we share with others the good news of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.

Paul was “confident” or “persuaded” that the God who began a good work in them would carry it on to completion until Christ returned. The New Testament speaks of salvation as a process. It says, “You were saved” (Romans 8:24; 1 Peter 3:20), referring to our initial commitment to Christ in which we moved from death to life. It says, “You are being saved” (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15), referring to God’s ongoing grace in our lives. Finally, it says, “You will be saved” (Romans 9:27; 1 Corinthians 3:15), referring to our final redemption on the day of judgment.

Salvation is a process of constant redemption and transformation.

**1:7-8.** Paul did not say exactly what was right for him to feel about the Philippians. But we assume it was related to his feelings of thankfulness, joy, and affection expressed in verses 7-8.

Later in this letter, we find that the Philippian church was experiencing internal conflict. By using the phrase “all of you” three times in these verses, the apostle may have wanted the members of that church to remember to hold each other in their hearts despite their differences.

Regardless of Paul’s circumstances, they shared God’s grace with him. This grace led them to minister to him while he was in prison, work with him as he defended and confirmed the gospel and suffer for its sake.

### Prayer (1:9-11)

**1:9.** Paul used the word *agape* to describe the love they were to have for each other. *Agape* referred to self-sacrificial love. He prayed it would abound more and more among them, like a rising flood.

The apostle affirmed the Philippians had that love, but it needed to grow. Later in the letter, we find some of the main causes of conflict in the church were pride and self-centeredness. *Agape* love was the solution for their conflicts. The more they grew in love, the better they would be able to get along and fulfill their mission in Christ.

Paul wanted their love to grow in knowledge and depth of insight. “Knowledge” was more than factual knowledge. It was relational knowledge. He prayed their love would grow in experience and discernment.



**1:10-11.** The Greek of verse 10 is ambiguous. It can mean “prove by testing things that differ” or “to distinguish the things that differ.” The term translated “prove” or “distinguish” was a verb used for assaying metals.

Paul prayed that self-sacrificial love would grow like a flood among them, giving them the ability to discern between the things that mattered and those that did not. This ability is critical to harmonious congregational life.

In addition to this, the apostle prayed they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes from Jesus Christ. The noun for “fruit” is in a singular, collective tense. He didn’t identify that fruit, but we can assume it was similar to the fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

Ultimately, all was to the glory and praise of God. By mentioning this, Paul reminded them that everything was about God, not them.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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In this section of Philippians, we see not only Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer for the church at Philippi, but also his high view of all churches. This high view presents a great vision for what our churches should be.

The apostle was thankful for the partnership in the gospel he had with the Philippians. “Partnership in the gospel” is a great expression of the mission of the church. That mission is to work as one to live the life of Christ and share the good news of Christ with the world. Sadly, many Christ followers see church membership as something akin to club affiliation. As members, they see the church as a vendor of religious services. They receive ministry from the church in exchange for their financial gifts.

But Paul’s language about the church shows that this view is far from what God intends for His people. Church members are vital to their local body of Christ. As such, they work in partnership with each other and God to make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world.

In addition to this, the apostle spoke of following Christ as a process of growth. He said to the Philippians that He who began a good work in them would carry it on to completion until the time of Christ’s return. Later, he

described growth as a process of growing in *agape* love and in depth of understanding in communion with God and each other.

The ultimate product of this growth is the fruit of righteousness. This fruit is not mere religious activity. It is love, joy, peace, and the good works they produce. For this reason, the metric of our discipleship in Christ is not what happens on Sunday, but what happens on Monday through Saturday.

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# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. As people enter, direct them to this question you've posted or written—*"Have you ever been prompted to write a thank you note to someone who had gone out of their way to do something for you? What prompted it? What did they do? And how did it make you feel?"* (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).)

Discuss with others as they enter. Once you're ready to begin, ask for a few reports of what prompts people to write thank you notes.

### Guide Bible Study

2. Say, *Today, as we look at Paul's letter to the Philippians, let's explore the tone of the thanksgiving/greeting he wrote to these believers.* Read or have someone read Philippians 1:1-11.
3. Ask, *What are some words you would use to describe this greeting?* (grateful, loving, thankful, joyful, and more)
4. What caused Paul to have these feelings toward this particular group of believers? (They went out of their way to minister to him, sending him gifts, and caring for him.)
5. Where was Paul during the time he was writing this letter? (He was in prison.)
6. Ask, *What are some ways Paul could have responded to his imprisonment? If it were you, what type of feelings do you imagine you might be subject to?* (fear; uncertainty; distress; anger; etc.)

7. Instead of these, let's look at how Paul expresses his thoughts and feelings in the first 11 verses of this chapter. As we have a volunteer read each verse, call out anything that is descriptive of how Paul was choosing to feel. (e.g.—peace; thankful; sure; yearning; affection; love; joy; confidence; etc.) Write the answers you get on the board.
8. Ask, *In the midst of his imprisonment, what was it that gave Paul the ability to feel like this?* (His joy was not dependent upon his circumstance. When imprisoned, he chose to focus on how this group brought him joy. He changed his focus, from his circumstances, to his faith in what God was doing and would do in his Philippian friends.)
9. Ask your participants to do a word search on the word “joy,” found in verse 4. What are some ways other Scripture passages communicate that “joy” is independent of circumstance? Examples: Romans 12:12; James 1:2-4; Philippians 4:4, etc. (one place they can do a search like this is using the online topical Bible—<http://www.openbible.info/topics/joy>. They might also utilize their concordance.
10. Now, using the list of terms your group used to describe Paul's feelings earlier, do a word search on each of those additional terms. (thankful; grateful; loving; etc.) Have groups work in teams of 2-3 to search several of the terms you wrote down at [www.openbible.info/topics](http://www.openbible.info/topics). Have them look for ways Scripture describes these to be independent of circumstances. (Example: 1 Thessalonians 5:18—“*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*”)
11. From the introduction to Philippians in the *Faith Life Study Bible*, the authors write: “*In Paul's Letter to the Philippians, his writing overflows with joy and thankfulness, even though he is writing from prison. Paul...was encouraged by the believers' concern for him and their faithfulness in living out the gospel. He teaches that the joy of the gospel should rule our lives, regardless of circumstances.*” <https://bible.faithlife.com/books/esv/Php1.1>

## Encourage Application

12. Ask, *What are some circumstances we often or recently find ourselves that make it hard to overflow with joy?* Give members time to discuss with a neighbor and then call out some answers, which you can record on the board. (loss of a loved one; being isolated from family; sickness; etc.)
13. Say, *If we're going to follow Paul's example and the clear encouragement from Scripture, how can we find joy, even in the midst of these admittedly very challenging situations?* With a neighbor or two, take a few minutes to discuss how we can be joyful *"in all circumstances."*
14. Ask participants to share some of the ways to be joyful.
15. Say, *This week, let's determine to find joy in all circumstances, and share that joy and encouragement with others.*
16. Close in prayer.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask your group as they arrive to be thinking about a time or experience that made it hard to feel joy. Once everyone has arrived, ask for reports. *Say, Today, we're going to see how Paul reminds us that joy is not dependent upon our circumstances.*

### Guide Bible Study

2. Read or have someone read Philippians 1:1-11.
3. As you read, ask the group to make notes of the kinds of feelings Paul expresses. (thankfulness; joy; assurance; etc.)
4. Take a moment and remind the group where Paul was during the writing of this letter to the Philippians. From the *Study Guide*, read or have someone read—*During his imprisonment, the Philippians would send Paul regular gifts to keep up his spirits. The significance of this cannot be understated. In Roman times, associating with a prisoner was much the same as it is now—there was a social stigma attached to it. The Philippians, however, knew about Paul and his plight and did not care about the social implications: just the spiritual ones. This enriched and enlivened Paul and he crafted this letter in response.*
5. State, *Because the believers at Philippi were so caring and close to Paul, they had developed a relationship with him that went beyond circumstances. They were determined to care for him regardless.*
6. Ask, *What is it about how deeply Paul was moved to care for the Philippians that made it possible for him to focus on joy, even while imprisoned? (He knew their love for him was genuine, and they wouldn't forsake him.)*
7. Ask, *Are there times we need to be reminded that, even in the midst of terrible circumstances, our God will never leave us nor forsake us? Though the*

church at Philippi couldn't change Paul's imprisonment, they COULD care for him THROUGH it. That certainty made an impact on Paul's ability to be thankful, joyful, assured, and confident in his letter to them.

8. Ask, *What are ways God has proven His absolute commitment to care for us and never abandon us? Can you find Scriptures where God promises these things?* Give your group time to find an encouraging Scripture that reminds us of God's constant care.
9. Give members of your group some of the following Scriptures and ask them to report:
  - 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 2:13; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 91:1-16; Exodus 34:6; Lamentations 3:23; Deuteronomy 7:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org)).
10. Ask for reports, and then ask, *If God's faithfulness reaches to the skies, if He will never leave us nor forsake us, then what can our response be when we face trials and tribulations?* Go back to the list of things Paul expressed in his greeting. (From item #2 above). Ask your group if they are willing to focus on our faithful God the next time, they are in a challenging circumstance, and be willing to express these kinds of responses to God in that circumstance.

### Encourage Application

11. Go back to your original question to the group as they entered. Things that have made it hard for us to feel joy. Ask them to think of one of these circumstances, and take a few minutes discussing with a neighbor how they could find a way to experience real joy in a situation like that.
12. Say, *This week, let's be determined to find joy "in all circumstances," and to share that joy with others.*
13. Close with prayer.