

# In-Joy

THE MESSAGE OF PHILIPPIANS

GUIDE BOOK



# IN-JOY

## THE MESSAGE OF PHILIPPIANS

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"  
Philippians 4:4*

These are words we'll eventually get to in Philippians but in fact it would make for an interesting exercise to count all the times that the word 'joy' or 'rejoice' comes up in this letter! Not that it doesn't contain some serious warnings, but this very personal letter (or epistle) from the apostle Paul stands out in the New Testament for just how joy-filled it is. It's a letter that shines with new priorities that makes joy possible even in hardship. It's a letter that bursts with Paul's heart-felt affection for these Philippians Christians, for how much their life is now centred on the gospel of Jesus. It's also a letter that overflows with a new confidence that comes from knowing the exalted Jesus and the new future he has for us.

But that's all for us to discover in the weeks ahead. In terms of our study approach, our growth groups are going to use a method called **COMA**. Previously we've been using the SWEDISH Method, and in some ways both SWEDISH and COMA are similar – they were both originally developed as a tool for one-to-one bible reading (including with our friends who are not Christian) and both provide a repeatable framework for discovering what a bible passage is saying. In fact, we hope tools like the SWEDISH and COMA help grow our convictions around the truth that faith is found 'in the word of Christ' (Romans 1:16; 10:17) so we don't need extra resources or especially provided-for study questions. God is not waiting on any of us to become 'experts' before we can have the ministry of helping others to come to faith and grow in their relationship with Jesus. If you want to think about this further, we've included for your own reading a couple of helpful articles at the very back of this booklet.

COMA method stands for **Context, Observation, Meaning, and Application**. As you'll see, under each step or section, there's a number of questions, but it's meant to be flexible as your growth group leader can choose one or two questions per step. You'll learn as you go, but for now here's some explanation:

**Context** - refers to the "surroundings" or background of the passage and the circumstances in which it was written.

**Observation** - means carefully examining the passage you're reading.

**Meaning** - refers to the main point or idea that the original human author wanted his original audience to understand in a particular text.

**Application** - refers to how the reader is supposed to respond to the text.

And if we could sneak in one more step it would be **P for Prayer!** (but COMAP doesn't as much roll off the tongue!) You'll see at the end of each week there is a call to pray. In fact, as we'll discover Philippians has lots to teach us about prayer!

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:4-7*

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# Study 1

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage we are reading?

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# Observation

What "jumps out" to you in the passage?

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Are there key connecting words (eg. therefore, for, but, because etc) and how do they shape the flow of the passage?

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Are there key words or phrases in the text?

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What theological terms are used and what do they mean?

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# Meaning

How does this text relate to other parts of the book?

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How does the passage describe Jesus Christ?

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What is the reader supposed to learn about God from the passage?

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If you could sum up the main point of the writer in a sentence, what would you say?

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## Application

Does this passage challenge or confirm my beliefs?

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Is there an attitude or assumption I must change?

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Are there any changes to my actions or the way I live being urged by the passage?

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The letter of Philippians itself teaches us that we're to be a praying church – Philippians 1:3, 9, 20 and 4:4-6. So here's some Philippians themes to shape our prayer time each week:

Thanksgiving and joy

The priority of preaching Christ and our partnership in the gospel.

Our exalted Lord Jesus

Our Future with Jesus

Our church – unity and humility together

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# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 20 August

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20

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# Study 2

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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What "jumps out" to you in the passage?

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- The priority of preaching Christ and our partnership in the gospel.
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# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 27 August

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26

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# Study 3

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage we are reading?

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# Weekend Away

SEPTEMBER 8-10

QCCC MAPLETON CONFERENCE CENTRE



## **Weekend Away**

Church won't be meeting in the EHSS Hall on Sunday 10 September so if you can't make it for the whole weekend away, why not come up for the Sunday morning.

## **Growth Group Break**

Growth Groups will now be on a break for the school holidays, with our next Philippians study being the week leading up to Sunday 8 October.



**BIBLE TALK NOTES**

Sunday 3 September

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

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# Study 4

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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# Observation

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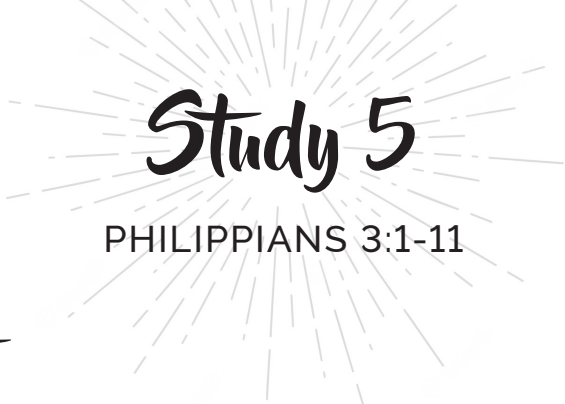


# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 8 October

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

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# Study 5

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage we are reading?

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# Observation

What "jumps out" to you in the passage?

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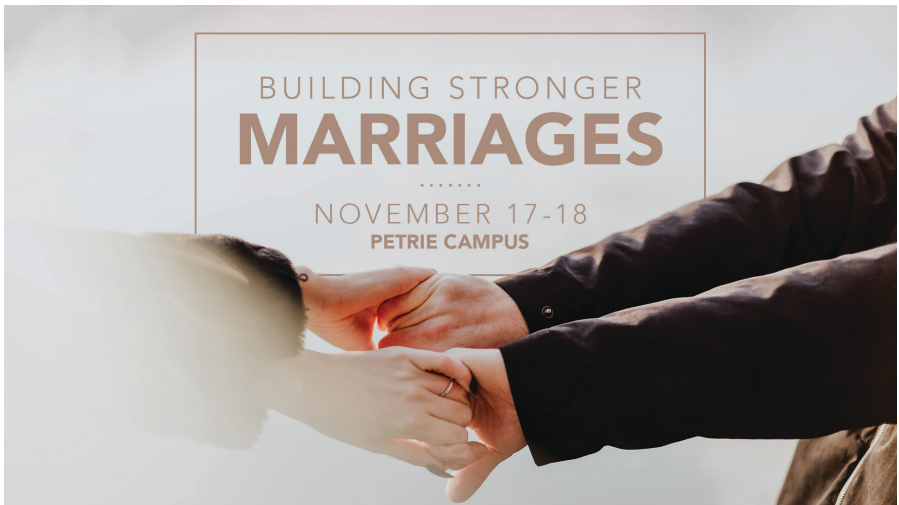
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# **BIBLE TALK NOTES**

Sunday 15 October

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

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# Study 6

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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# Observation

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Thanksgiving and joy

The priority of preaching Christ and our partnership in the gospel.

Our exalted Lord Jesus

Our Future with Jesus

Our church – unity and humility together

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# GUESS WHO'S COMING TO LUNCH?

Sunday 5 November

830 Congregation

Register here



# COMMUNITY LUNCH

Sunday 5 November

Bring a Plate

1030 Congregation





# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 22 October

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:1

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# Study 7

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-9

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage we are reading?

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# Observation

What "jumps out" to you in the passage?

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Our exalted Lord Jesus

Our Future with Jesus

Our church – unity and humility together

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# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 29 October

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-9

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# Study 8

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

## Context

Who wrote the passage and to whom?

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What is the literary "genre" of the passage—history, poetry, a letter, law, etc., and how should we read it?

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What can you learn about the person or situation to which the letter is written?

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What clues are there about the author and his circumstances?

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What was the main point of the passage immediately before this one?

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Are there logical or thematic connections to the passage we are reading?

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# BIBLE TALK NOTES

Sunday 5 November

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

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# “Go Ahead and Ask”

By Chris Well

<https://matthiasmedia.com/blogs/news/go-ahead-and-ask>



My friend and I sat across from one another at the cafe. He was enjoying a bacon and egg roll and thinking about football. All I could think of were ninety-nine reasons why asking him to read the Bible with me was a terrible idea.

*“You already know what he’s going to say.”*

*“It’ll ruin your friendship.”*

*“You’ll look like an idiot.”*

I drained the last of my lukewarm coffee, wiped my palms on my blue jeans, and took a deep breath.

## Five reasons to go ahead and ask

Have you ever been there? If so, take heart. Here are five reasons why you should go ahead and ask that friend to read with you, even if you feel nervous.

### **1) You don’t know what God might be doing in their life**

The truth is, you don’t know how the Lord might already be moving in a person’s life, drawing them to himself (John 10:27).

You assume your co-worker would never be interested in the things of God. You think he'd never read with you. And yet, you didn't see him last week when he pulled his grandfather's old King James off the shelf. You didn't see him trace the old man's notes in the margin with his fingers, longing to have the sense of purpose he had.

You assume your brother-in-law will never turn to Christ. And yet, while you've been moping over his disinterest in spiritual matters, he has spent the last three hours watching Jordan Peterson online, desperate for someone—anyone—to help him make sense of his life.

You assume your neighbour has written off Jesus, yet yesterday she cried out to God for the first time in years.

We do not know how God might be moving in our friends' lives. So go ahead and ask. You may, like Philip in Acts 8, stumble upon a person who is ready and waiting for someone to tell them the truth.

## **2) You might be the only 'church' they see**

I don't have to tell you that fewer and fewer people today are going to church. I also don't have to tell you that for some even stepping foot on a Christian campus seems inconceivable. (If you have trouble imagining this, consider how you might feel walking into an Islamic worship service or a Jehovah's Witnesses' meeting.)

While our friends may never darken our church's doors, we can take the gospel to them. God is sovereign. He has placed people in our lives for a reason (Phil 1:12-13). It is no coincidence that we work where we work, were born into the family we were born into, and happen to like rugby and photography. So consider who God has sovereignly placed in your life and ask, "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?" (Rom 10:14).

## **3) You are never going to feel like you know 'enough'**

If you wait until you feel 100% equipped to read the Bible one-to-one with that non-Christian friend, I can guarantee you'll never do it. It's okay to feel like you haven't 'arrived'. None of us have. It's right to feel a sense of holy desperation when you consider the task of reading one-to-one. God's not calling you to be a contestant on a



Bible trivia game show. Nor is he asking you to write a dissertation on the identity of the Beast in Revelation 13. All he's calling you to do is to have a conversation over his Word.

Consider how Christianity spread in the first century. Sure, Peter preached at Pentecost, and thousands came to Christ; Philip proclaimed Christ in Samaria and "the crowds with one accord paid attention" (Acts 8:6). However, the most significant gospel growth came as ordinary Christians reached out to ordinary people in love and simply had a conversation.

#### **4) You might be surprised by what they say**

If you're a genuine person and a true friend to your non-believing friend, chances are they won't be offended by the fact you asked them to read. Now, they may say, "That's not for me," or "Not right now," but the chances of this severing the relationship are pretty low. In fact, in a study a few years ago, researchers in America discovered that 61% of millennials said they would "be willing to study the Bible if a friend asked me to."

Most people want to know about their friend's interests. Your friends want to know about your love for Chinese food or your passion for carpentry. As humans, we invite people to share our interests all the time. Instead of assuming the worst about your co-worker or neighbour, why not hope for the best? They may not be as closed-minded as you think.

#### **5) You were sought once, too**

Finally, when you feel powerless to ask, remember you were once in their shoes, too. You were once blinded to the truth of God and desperately lost in sin, as well.

That is, until the Son of Man sought you (Luke 19:10).

He left the ninety-nine to rescue you (Luke 15:1-7). He pursued you and won your heart when he was under no obligation to do so.

For some, the Lord sought you through a grandparent who prayed for you daily. For others, the Lord broke into your life through a roommate at university who cared enough to listen. For me, the Lord changed my life through a pastor who not only preached the

truth, but also took the time to answer my questions about God. Think back on your own life. Who, compelled by God's pursuit of them, made a commitment to pursue you in love? Who, moved by God's heart for the lost, reached out to your lost soul?

Do you realize they might have been nervous, too?

When you get nervous about intentionally seeking out your friends and family, remember the Lord himself sought you first.

### **This week, ask**

So this week, when you see that non-Christian friend, go ahead and ask. Don't overdo it. Don't make it more pressure-filled than it has to be. Just see if they would ever want to open up the Bible with you. Tell them how it has changed your life. And tell them if they hate it, you'll never make them do it again.

Seek them out. Invite them in. And when your palms get sweaty, go ahead and ask.

# “I went ahead and asked; um, now what?”

By Ian Carmichael

<https://matthiasmedia.com/blogs/news/go-ahead-and-ask>



I hope you didn't miss the really encouraging blog post by Chris Wells, 'Go ahead and ask'. Chris gave us five compelling reasons why we should ask our non-Christian friend to read the Bible with us, which more than offset the "ninety-nine reasons" that flood into our heads and convince us not to ask when the opportunity presents itself.

As a lifelong 'rationalizer', that article certainly resonated with me. Most of my reasons for not asking are just that: rationalizations that don't stand up to scrutiny. But one reason I think that many of us have for not asking is this: we don't know what to do if they actually say yes.

So I want to share some thoughts about resources that might help you overcome that last hurdle.

## You don't need 'em

Firstly, you don't need to use any other resources than your Bible. As David Helm puts it in his book ***One-to-One Bible Reading: a simple guide for every Christian***:



*"... the greatest hindrance to inviting someone to read one-to-one will be an unbiblical view that you are not ready for this. You will tell yourself that you haven't been properly trained, or simply don't know enough about the Bible to help another person along the way... But it's also just not true. Any committed Christian is capable of initiating a good conversation on a biblical text."*

Theologically we affirm that the power to generate Christian faith is found in the "word of Christ" (Rom 1:16, 10:17). We don't need other resources to make it 'effective'.

But it's more than just an important theological point. There is an attractive integrity to opening up the Bible—most likely to one of the four Gospels—and just reading it with inquiring minds. And as the quote above suggests, if you've been a Christian for a while, you should be able to lead an unbelieving friend through a Gospel and help them understand what they are reading.

In fact, David's book contains suggestions for which parts of the Bible to open up with a non-Christian (see chapter 9). He also suggests using the Swedish Method or **COMA method** (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application).









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