

***Bon Appétit* Course 2: Salad (Understand) Philippians 2** **David Bawks - Pathway Community Church (Feb 14, 2021)**

Hey everyone! As you've just seen, we're starting a new 8 week life group study looking at the book of Colossians, starting on **March 3**, so please let me know if you would like to join this group. We'll be meeting on Wednesday night at 7 pm, and still virtual for the time being. Email me at david@pathwayfremont.org if you'd like to join.

At the end of my message today, I'm going to lead us in celebrating and partaking in the sacrament of communion together, so please grab some bread and juice and make sure they are handy.

Welcome to week 2 of our series on how to study the Bible called **Bon Appétit**. Last week we started this series, comparing the experience of having a four course meal with our experience in reading the Bible. What that means for us is an appetizer, a salad, a main course and then a take away we bring home to eat later. In this example, these **four courses** match with **four steps** in studying the Bible – 1) **reading**, 2) **understanding**, 3) **explaining**, 4) **applying**. [slide] The appetizer corresponds with reading, the first initial step, the very beginning both of an elaborate meal and the process of studying and living out the message of the Bible. During a meal, an appetizer is often a small biting or soup – something light that helps get up your appetite for the real thing. Last week we explored this step.

I do want to clarify something – I don't mean that all of these steps are not necessary every time you open the Bible, every time you read or look at a passage. That would be overwhelming. But when you want to go deep, and you can set aside the time to do this, these are the steps that will allow you really get into the Bible.

Today we are looking at our second course in our four-course meal, the salad, which is the step of understanding what a passage actually says. This is often the longest and most difficult of all the four steps. But just like a salad, although it is not always the most appealing or exciting dish to eat, it is healthy and very rewarding. This step is often a lot of work and thought, but it is well worth it.

Next week we will come to the third course which is the **main course**, and this is **explaining**. Once we have done the ground work of figuring out what our passage is saying, exploring the words, the structure, the purpose and so on, then we have deeper questions to answer about what the passage means. We need to explain what the main point is, how it fits into the Bible's overall message, and what general truths we can learn from a passage. This is where a lot of the meat and the substance of a meal comes, and the same is true in studying the Bible.

Finally, we have our **fourth course**, which is technically not really a course on its own, but is a **take-away**. This is the **application for our lives today**, and this is in some ways the most important step. It is also one of the easiest steps to mess up. This will be our focus during the last week of this series.

Last week we began by reading Philippians 2:12-16 in **three different translations**. I mentioned the importance of **praying** before we read, and of reading **slowly and carefully**. Today we are trying to understand exactly what the text says, through a series of questions we will answer.

Before we read it and get to our questions for today, picture this in your mind: Paul is in prison, perhaps in Rome, thinking back to a time ten years before when he was on his second missionary journey. He had seen a vision of a man asking them to go to Macedonia to help. Now in prison, he remembers the same vision again, as vivid as ever. He thinks of the emotion and depth of the man begging for help. Accompanied by Silas and Timothy, and with Luke joining them, they crossed the sea into Macedonia—within the borders of modern-day Greece. The first major city they came to was Philippi, where they stayed for several days. They looked around for a place of prayer, and on the Sabbath, they found a group of women meeting by the river, where one named Lydia came to faith in Christ through the words of Paul.

Not everything would go as smoothly, however. Soon after, Paul ran into trouble when he cast out a demon from a girl who could tell the future and ended up in jail. Nonetheless, God was still at work, and an earthquake broke open the cells and set Paul and Silas free. From Philippi they went on to Thessalonica, leaving behind a vibrant church. Paul's thoughts of the Philippian church were filled with grateful appreciation, and he wrote them one of the most positive and joyful epistles he would ever compose.

Now that we have seen a sketch of chapter 2, let's read it together – please turn to Philippians chapter 2. We'll read from verse 1 to verse 16.

Philippians 2 ¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among

them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. NIV

That is the passage we are looking at for this month, focusing especially on the last 4 verses, 12-16. For today we going through a set of 5 questions, listed here: words, genre, context, purpose, and setting.

1. Words – obey, work out, complaining, arguing, blameless, pure, shine, boast

The first aspect of our text we are looking at the significant words. Whenever you look at a passage in depth, I would encourage you to either highlight or circle the important words. Spend some time studying what the word means, and how it is used in other verses. There are a few ways to do this – one is by using a concordance, which is a list of all the times a word is used in the Bible. You can find them online, and also do a search for Bible word study, and get dictionary and other resources online. Check out websites like ‘biblestudytools.com’ or ‘TheBible.org’.

When I looked at this passage, here are a few of the words that struck me as being important: obey, work out, grumbling, arguing, blameless, pure, shine, boast [slide]. I did a bit more research on four of them, and this is what I found:

- **Obey** – comes from the idea ‘to listen’, originally means one who answers the door (porter, butler), also to obey a command, or allow yourself to be governed by someone
- **Work out** - to do something with success and/or thoroughness - 'to accomplish, to perform successfully, to do thoroughly.' Same word in other places carries the idea of bringing someone about, ‘suffering produces perseverance’; (Rom 5:3 NIV)
- **Grumbling** – complaining or murmuring, secret talk, whispering, dissatisfaction
- **Blameless** - free from fault or defect, innocent, without guilt (used to describe Zechariah and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist, they were blameless in regards to the law)

2. Genre – What type of passage is this? (narrative, poetry, history, parable, etc.)

This question will assist us to understand what kind of passage we are reading, and the Bible has many different kinds – some are stories, or narratives, others are poetry, some are law, and others are parables. For us, the answer to this question is that the genre of Philippians is letter, or epistle. Paul was writing a letter to the church at the city of Philippi. When we go about the steps of study, we need to remember that this is a letter, and to interpret it according to how we would understand and apply a letter.

3. Context – Where does the passage fit in the larger flow of the book?

To figure out where our passage comes, we need to find a basic outline of the book. The way to do this is to read through the book, figuring out where the major sections come, and what separates them. Fortunately the internet can be a big help, and you can find many outlines of Bible books just by searching google. Here’s one I found helpful, from the ESV Study Bible:

1. Greeting and Prayer (1:1–11)
2. Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment (1:12–30)
3. Encouragement to Humble Service (2:1–30)
4. Opponents of the Gospel: Where Does Righteousness Come From? (3:1–21)
5. Concluding Encouragement and Thanksgiving (4:1–23) ESV Study Bible

Our passage comes about in the middle of the book, after Paul's greetings, reflections on his imprisonment and after the hymn of chapter 2 that explores the example of Christ humbling himself and coming to earth to save us and become our Lord and savior. After our section, Paul talks about Timothy and Epaphroditus, then moving into warnings and his conclusion.

Here's another outline from Dr. J Veron McGee:

1. Philosophy for Christian Living (chapter 1)
2. Pattern for Christian Living (chapter 2)
3. Prize for Christian Living (chapter 3)
4. Power for Christian Living (chapter 4)

Ok, we're halfway through! We have three questions remaining, looking at structure, purpose and setting (show slide). Let's move to part 4, purpose.

4. Purpose – Why was the book or passage written?

We'll begin with the larger purpose of the book of Philippians. Paul wrote Philippians from prison, and one of his major purposes was to thank them for the gift they sent through Epaphroditus. Basically, Philippians is an extended thank-you note, with other themes also included. I have also raised support myself, and I had an opportunity to do a training session on how to raise support, and one of the principles I emphasized through my own experience is the important of saying thank-you, in writing. I seek to hand-write and mail a thank-you note for all those who have supported me in my ministry. That's what Paul was doing it, and he sent it back with Epaphroditus.

Philippians was also written to share **an update on Paul's situation in prison**, and to **encourage** the Philippian church. He was writing to request them to **rejoice in the Lord**, and to be **unified** in their fellowship, **especially against false teachers**. He also writes to **recommend Timothy** to them, saying he hoped to send Timothy to them soon. Here is a summary of some reasons. (show slide)

- Thank-you note
- Update on Paul's situation in prison
- Encourage the Philippian church
- Warn against false teachers

5. Setting – In what situation or for what situation was the book or passage actually written?

Something else to note is that Philippi was a Roman colony, and was strongly loyal to Rome. In the year 42 B.C., about 100 years before this letter was written, there was a famous battle in Philippi that marked the end of the Roman Republic and the beginning of the Roman Empire. Philippi was given the

highest status a Roman territory could achieve, meaning residents were given Roman citizenship, could buy land, and were exempt from certain taxes.

- From prison
- Probably 60-61 A.D.
- To Philippi in Macedonia (modern day Greece)

Conclusion

Ok, so we've gotten through five questions! I know this course isn't an easy one. When you go deep in study like this, I'd encourage all of us to find the resources we need to be able to answer these questions – books, commentaries, websites, and friends who can help us. Studying the Bible is often best done in community, in a small group with other people. Sometimes you will hear questions, facts, or applications about a particular passage you hadn't considered. We should always seek to balance our personal, individual reading and study with group study and discussion – so that neither one gets out of proportion – we only read alone, or we only discuss the Bible with others and don't read it ourselves. If you're interesting in diving into the book of Colossians with us, then join us for this group. If today seemed a bit tough, don't give up, next week we will move to explaining, which is usually a slightly easier step. Then we will get to application on Feb 28.

Coming up: we have our **annual meeting** on Feb 21 at 4 pm. We'll be doing this on Zoom, and will give a 2020 update, share our 2021 goals and budget, and our plans and vision going forward. Please mark your calendars and check your email for the Zoom link. Then on Friday Feb 26 we'll have our online movie night, watching Just Mercy.

I'm going to end with communion. As we have been using this image and metaphor of food during this sermon series, remember that Jesus also used the same image in the last supper. Jesus taught this: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). John said that the Word became flesh, and lived among us. We can still experience and taste the word as we read the incredible and true message of God, the message of hope and life found in scripture. We can participate in these words as we celebrate communion. I'll invite anyone watching this who has taken the step of following Jesus to join us in this sacrament together.

I'm going to read from 1 Cor 11.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Let's eat the bread together.

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Let's pray.

2. Understand – What does the passage actually say?

2.1 Words – What is the meaning of individual words? Look up any you don't know.

2.2 Genre – What type of passage is this? (narrative, poetry, history, parable, etc.)

2.3 Context – Where does the passage fit in the larger flow of the book?

2.4 Purpose – Why was the book or passage written?

2.5 Setting – In what situation or for what situation was the book or passage actually written?