

Grace Church Philippi

Joy Made Complete | Philippians 1:1-2

Reminder

The Bible is a book about God and what he has done, is doing, and will do to restore all things back to the way they are supposed to be. As someone has said, “The Bible can be summed up like this: God made it. We broke it. Jesus fixes it.” So as we study the Bible, we want to ensure our end goal is to know and delight in God – not simply get some practical “to dos” or life advice. We do this by striving to understand and apply the authorial intent of God’s word. To help find the authorial intent of a passage and apply it in meaningful ways, it’s helpful to think along the lines of observation, interpretation, and application.

Observation asks, “What do I see?” The goal is to examine the passage finding key words or ideas. It’s the process of getting really familiar (in a good way) with the text. Interpretation takes what we find in a passage and asks, “What does it mean?” The goal is to determine the author’s intent in writing the passage. Finally, once we understand the meaning of a passage we can move to application asking, “Why does it matter?”

While we may not read the Bible by moving concretely and linearly from through these three steps one at a time, they should always be present we reading and studying the Bible. We’ll discuss this more at T2 in February.

Study

1. Read Acts 16:11-34. These verses describe the beginnings of the Philippi church.
 - a. What do you notice about the people Paul meets and are converted?
 - b. What does this tell us about the nature of the gospel?
 - c. What does this tell us about the nature of the church?
 - d. How might this inform the context as we read Philippians?

Get the group to see the wide variety of people who respond to the gospel. The gospel is powerful enough to save people from all walks of life; therefore, we should expect the church to be filled with a diverse group of people. The beginnings of “Grace Church Philippi” are unexpected, yet serve to showcase the beauty of the gospel.

2. Read Philippians 1-4 (yep, the whole book!).
 - a. What are the major themes or big ideas in this book? (Hint: Look for repeated words or ideas).
 - b. What does this tell us about Paul’s purposes in writing Philippians?
 - c. With those purposes in mind, how should we look for this letter to encourage and challenge us as a church body? Be as specific as possible.

As you read Philippians the main themes seem to be:

- **Joy** – 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:4, 10
- **Unity** – 1:27; 2:1-2; 4:2-3;
- **Fellowship** – 1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14, 15 [twice]
 - Partnership, partakers, participation, share, All these words contain the Greek word *koinonia*, “fellowship”
- **Christ** – No other noun occurs more in Philippians than his name
- **Gospel** – 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27 [twice]; 2:22; 4:3, 15. The word “gospel” appears more times per line in Philippians than any book in the NT

Have the group think through specific ways these themes will encourage or challenge Restoration Church in 2017. Where is God's grace evident? Where do we need to grow more?

3. Focusing on 1:1-2:
 - a. What's does it mean for Paul to describe himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus?" What does this tell us about Paul's posture in writing the letter?
 - b. Who is Paul's audience?
 - c. What important terms or ideas do you see in these verses?

Paul see's himself not as superior to the church, but as a servant of Christ, he's also a servant of the church. In most letters, Paul calls himself an "apostle" but that's absent here. This, perhaps, suggest a warm familiarity with the Philippian church. Notice he's writing to "all the saints" – that is, this letter is corporate not just individual. In fact, throughout the letter you see many "you all" statements. He's writing to the church members and church leaders (overseers and deacons). Don't just skip over the salutation as it tells us a lot about the character of God and the work of Christ. In that sentence alone, we have "grace," "peace from God," "our Father," and "Lord Jesus Christ." Have the group think about these terms in relation to the main themes of the letter.

4. General Bible study questions:
 - a. What do these verses tell us about the character of God?
 - b. What do these verses tell us about tell us about ourselves?
 - c. How does this passage point us to and help us delight in Jesus Christ?
 - d. What's one way this passage challenges or encourages a specific belief or behavior?

Accountability: Catch up from the break.