

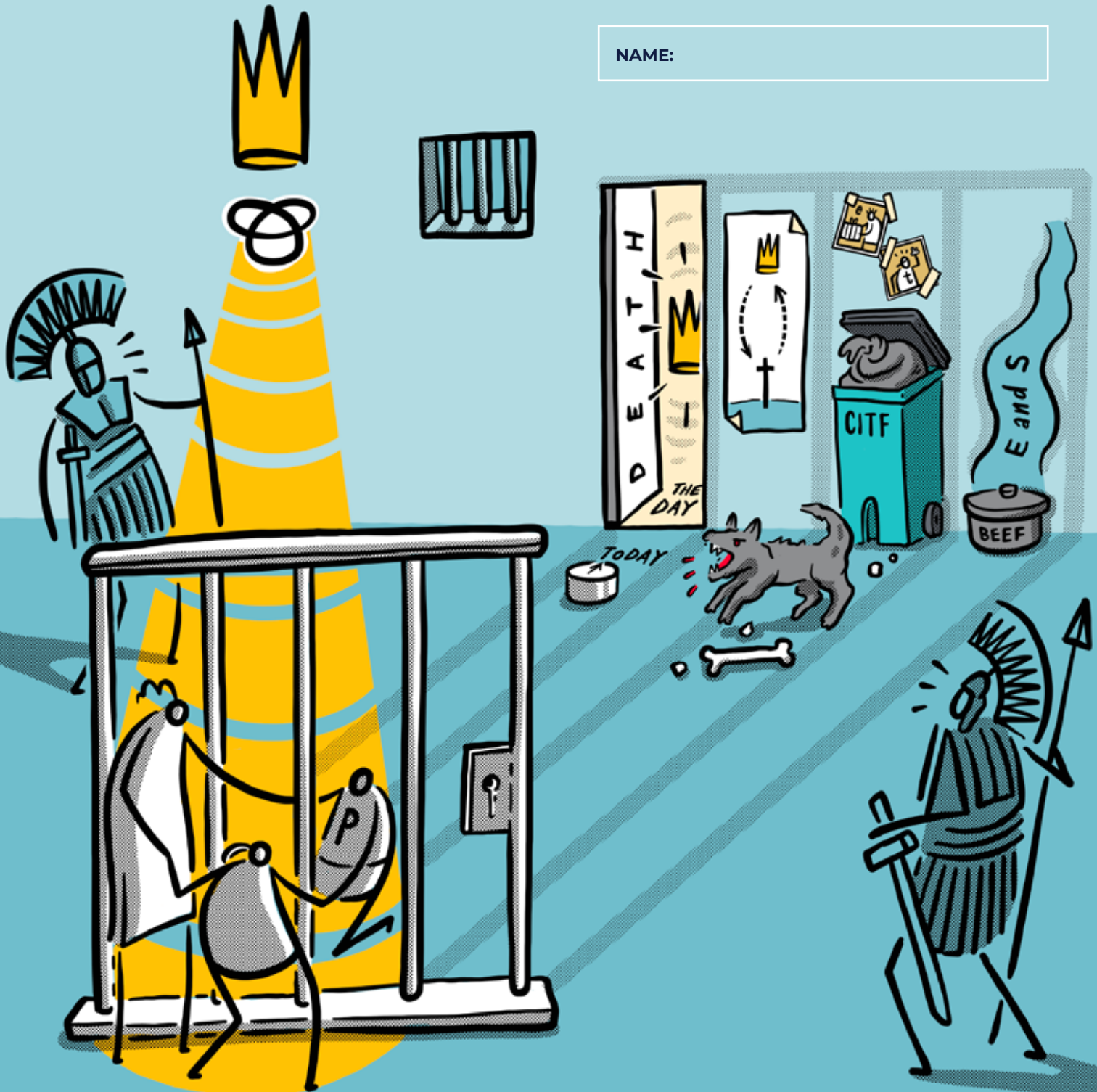
PORTRAITS FROM A PRISON CELL

LEADERS'
BOOK

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NAME:



PHILIPPIANS IN ELEVEN SESSIONS

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Everywhere a mission field
(1:12-30)

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SESSION THREE

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KEYS TO OUR STUDY

THE LINK – CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

This helps you to see how this passage fits into the immediate verses and the whole book.

THE TRUTH – THE SEAT BELT TEST

Imagine one of your young people getting into their parents' car, and as they put their seat belt on the parent asks, "what was it all about today". The young person's answer should reflect the main point of the session. This will be reflected in the leading, songs, Small groups and especially the talk.

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

This takes you through the central truth of the passage. It will highlight the main points of application and give both the person giving the talk and the Small group leader what they need to understand the passage.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – A TIME TO APPLY

A time to find out how much of the talk the young people have understood.

A time to correct any misunderstandings.

A time to apply the main points in a skilful and sensitive way.

An opportunity to build your relationship with the young people.

APPLICATION – WHAT'S IN YOUR PICTURE?

Application is often what people struggle with when preparing talks etc. I have tried my best to give hints as to how to apply each passage. With the themes of portraits, I thought it best to stay with that theme and call it, 'what's in your picture'.

EXPLAINING DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

Every passage we look at I will seek to identify difficult words or phrases. I will then seek to sum them up in a way that will help the young people understand and remember their important meaning.

DEFINING IMAGE OR REPEATED PHRASE

When we teach young people, one of aims must be that they remember what we have taught them. There are many ways of doing that, but one is to use a defining image or a repeated phrase. When it's appropriate, I will suggest one that you might want to use.

WHY BIG THEMES?

One of the best ways to approach a book like this, and teach it to young people, is to work out its biggest themes. This will help us to get a good grasp of its main message and purpose, enabling us to know how each individual passage fits within the book as a whole.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS: PORTRAITS FROM A PRISON CELL



The book of Philippians has one main theme running through:

Joyful Gospel Partnership.

PARTNERSHIP

We have the theme of joyful gospel partnership introduced right at the beginning (1:5). The apostle's aim is to teach the Philippian church how to live worthy, stand firm, and stay united (1:27–29). His passion is to see gospel partners shining like stars, as they hold out the word of truth (2:12–16).

Threats To That Unity

The threats to the unity of God's people are real, and come from two different directions.

Enemies from the inside

1:15–17 – Those preaching Christ with wrong motives

3:1–4 – False teachers

2:14, 4:1–3 – Arguments and disunity from within the church family

Enemies from the outside

1:27–29 – Those who want the preaching of Christ stopped altogether

2:14 – The crooked and depraved generation

3:18–21 – Enemies of the cross of Christ

PORTRAITS

The apostle Paul is extremely skilful in the way he illustrates what joyful gospel partnership looks like. His aim is to paint four stunning portraits of the very best gospel partners.

Father & Son – 2:5–11

These verses reveal two portraits. The first is Jesus the obedient servant (2:6–8), and the second the Father who exalts Jesus for his obedience (2:9–11).

Paul

Throughout the book Paul paints a self-portrait, with the aim of showing how he seeks to reflect the master portrait (2:9–11).

TEXT	WHAT PAUL SEEKS TO MODEL TO THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH
1:3	Committed prayer
1:7–8	How to love God's people whatever the circumstances
1:12–14	How to suffer for the Gospel whatever the circumstance
1:15–18	How to deal with opposition from within
1:18–26	How to deal with opposition and persecution
2:1–5	He models how to look to the example of Jesus
2:19, 25	How to model the Father's generosity
2:19–30	How to mentor younger Christians
3:1–4	How to expose false teachers
3:7–14	How to pursue likeness to Christ
3:17	How to humbly call people to follow your example
4:1	How to love God's people
4:2–3	How to deal with disunity
4:4–7	How to pray
4:9	How to humbly call people to follow your example
4:10–13	How to live a contented lifestyle

TIMOTHY & EPAPHRODITUS – 2:19–30

In Timothy & Epaphroditus we have two skilful sketches that reflect the master portrait of Jesus (2:9–11). As the Philippian church learn to gaze at the portraits, they will learn how to do four things.

They will learn how to be a humble servant (1:1, 2:7)

They will learn how to make right choices (1:9–11)

They will learn to live worthy, stand firm and stay united (1:27)

They will learn how to shine like stars (2:15)

JOYFUL PROGRESS

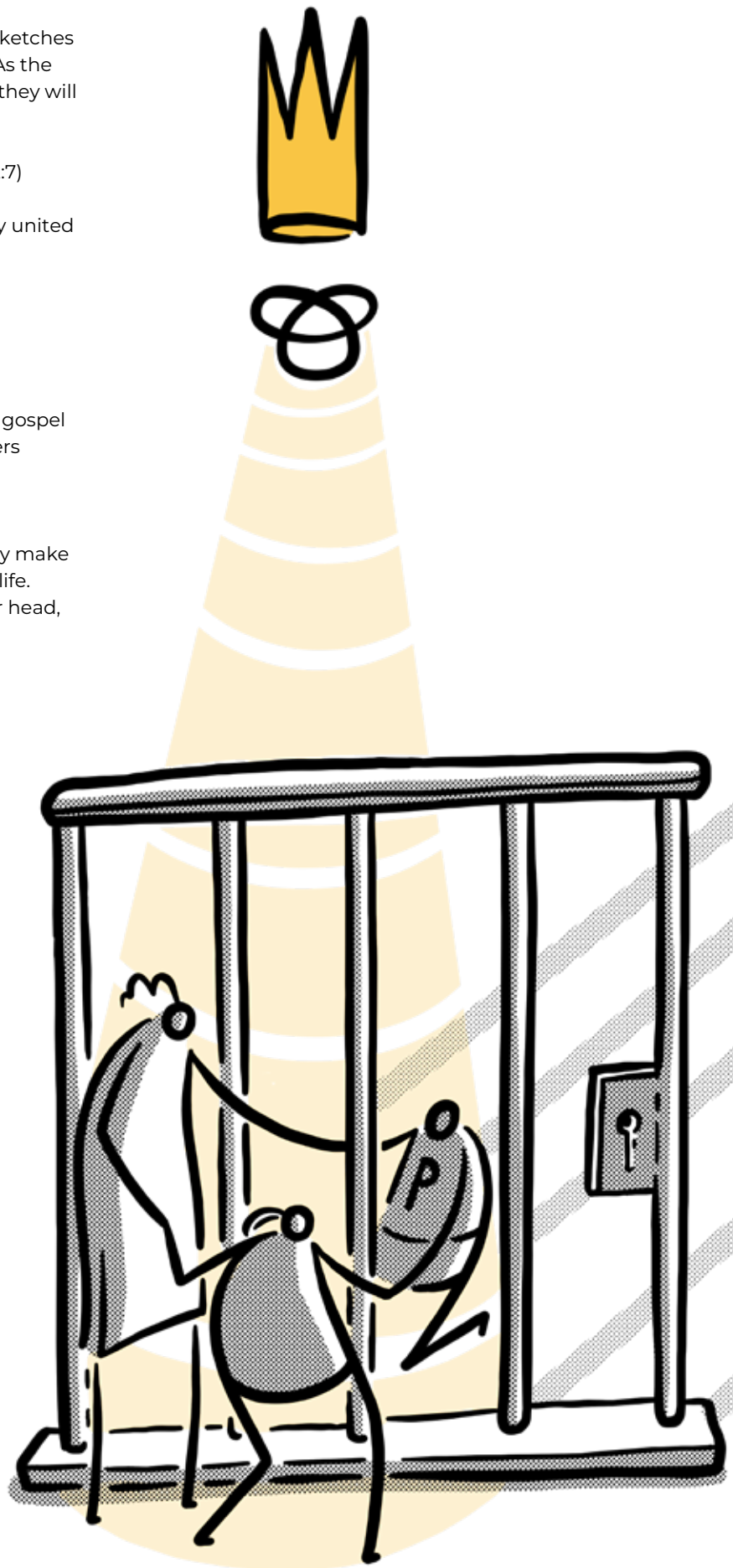
The way the gospel progresses is through joyful gospel dependence. We learn this through Paul's prayers

Paul's Prayers for the Philippian church

1:3–4 = His prayers are full of thanks

1:9–11 = He prays for them to have insight, so they make right choices. Right choices lead to a blameless life.

4:4–17 = He prays that God's peace will rule their head, heart and hands



FOR GIVING TALKS

For those giving talks (though I think they will help all the leaders), I have prepared 11 short video interviews. Their aim, is to provide helpful ideas as to how you can teach each passage. Below are what I call the Four Friendly Fears. Every time I give a talk from God's word, these are the four things that burn in my mind and conscience.

Friendly Fear 1: Have I understood God's Word clearly?

Is it flowing through my blood stream?

Friendly Fear 2: Have I taught God's Word clearly?

Have the young people left understanding what God's Word has said?

Friendly Fear 3: Will the young people remember what I have taught them?

Have I taught them in such a way they remember the message of God's Word?

Friendly Fear 4: Will the young people know how to apply God's Word on a Monday morning?

Have I undermined the lie of secularism or reinforced it?

HERE ARE JUST ANOTHER FEW THOUGHTS ON PREACHING:

A good sermon has to have three elements which I call Three P's:

"It **proves** an appeal to the intellect, it **paints** an appeal to the imagination, and it **persuades** an appeal to the heart"

Mervyn A. Warren

- 1. Proves** = Intellect = God's truth properly understood
- 2. Paints** = Imagination = God's truth creatively explained
- 3. Persuasion** = God's truth passionately applied

A good talk is like a good film

- 1.** Good content
- 2.** Good structure
- 3.** Engaging style

WHO ARE YER? (1:1–11)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

1:1 Servants = One who gives their complete obedience and all that they are to Jesus.

1:1 God's holy people = Separation not segregation. Separated by obedience to God.

1:3 Joy = An attitude that judges the reality of God's love, by what he's promised, instead of life's current circumstance.

1:4 Partnership = Joint ownership and commitment to each other, whatever the result or opposition.

1:4 Gospel = God's good news.

1:6 Good work = God's sovereign initiative in saving us.

1:6 Day of Christ Jesus = The day when Jesus returns to judge.

1:6 Feel = "The sympathetic interest and concern, expressing as it does the action of the heart as well as the intellect" *Michael*

1:7 I have you in my heart = Sense of oneness.

1:8 I long for all of you with the affection = "A longing love that moves your whole being." *A. Motyer*

"His pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ' as though Christ were expressing his love through the personality of his servant." *J. B. Lightfoot*

1:9 Knowledge and depth of insight = Knowing what God has said, so that you can make the right moral choices.

1:9 Discern = To test something, so as to make sure it's the real thing.

1:10 Pure = Unmixed, a life without compromise.

1:10 Blameless = A life of integrity, leaving people with no opportunity to point the finger.

1:11 Fruit of righteousness = The enjoyment of being in a right relationship with God, that leads to obedience.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Paul introduces to us the three major themes, as he links our identity to the portrait of Jesus and himself.

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Paul links our identity to two portraits, his own and then Jesus.

CHANTS

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners, Who Are You?

Youth: God's Holy Servants (1:1)

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners, Who Do You Belong Too?

Youth: Jesus (1:1)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

Identity

Servants Of Jesus – 1:1–2

As we walk with Paul through his picture gallery, he wants us to gaze and then be changed by the portraits that we see.

Here's the first glimpse of what it means to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus. The great apostle is a servant of Jesus Christ, a term that describes every Christian in Philippi, and every Christian today.

The portrait of Jesus centres upon the image of a servant.

His will is not his own, for he's embraced the Father's plan to redeem the world (2:8). When we follow in the footsteps of Jesus our will embraces the same plan. Like our saviour, our will, desires, talents, are given over to the Father's glory.

This is a massive truth for our young people to engage with, understand and grab hold of. The day a young person becomes a Christian, their whole identity instantly changes. From now on their primary identity comes from the fact that they belong to Jesus as his servant. Every other identity they own, is second to the fact that they belong to Jesus as his servant.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

This is a huge challenge for our young people, for our culture says freedom is being 'true to yourself'. The servant of Jesus rejects this and instead embraces the Fathers plan to redeem the world. In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

God's Holy People – 1:2, 6

In the mind of a young person the world 'holy' conjures up a negative and irrelevant image. Sadly, even Christians relate to the word 'holy' in a negative way, making it more about lots of no's than lots of yes's.

Instead, being 'holy' is all about what God is doing within the life of an individual Christian, and the community as a whole. When God saves us, his work is to create in us a mind that thinks like Jesus (2:5), which is the best definition of what it means to be holy. This will mean separation from the world when it refuses to act like Jesus, but never segregation from it. Holiness and being a servant fit perfectly together.

SERVANT = WHO YOU BELONG TO HOLINESS = THINKING AND ACTING LIKE THE ONE WHO OWNS YOU

The beauty of 1:6, is that the initiative comes from God, for he's the one who starts the 'good work' of making us more like Jesus. This truth is designed to give us confidence, as we seek to grow as followers of Jesus. The completion of God's work, is as guaranteed as the day of Jesus' return (1:6).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

What does it look like for a young person to think and act like Jesus?

Every Christian is a work of God, and its completion is as sure as the day of judgment.

This result of believing this truth is confidence.

Gospel Partners – 1:5

The third ingredient which makes up our identity, is that we are saved to partner. This brings another massive challenge to our young people, for our culture dances to a very different tune. Our culture thinks freedom is found through being an individual. As God's servants we are called to partner, as our minds are transformed to reflect the Lord Jesus. In a world that's warped and crooked (2:15), reflecting the mind and character of the Lord Jesus is incredibly hard, which is why we need each other. The picture Paul has in mind, when using the word partnership, is a team of Gladiators fighting an enemy. Staying together as one, thinking and fighting as one, is crucial if victory is to be had.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Thinking like the Lord Jesus (2:5), is only achieved through partnership with other servants of Jesus.

HIS HEART – 1:3, 7, 8

Here we have the first portrait – Paul's self portrait

His Heart & Affection – 1:7-8

The great apostle moves from theory to practice, as he models what gospel partnership looks like. The Lord Jesus' love is expressed through costly sacrifice and a readiness to do anything to save those he loves (2:6-8). It's this same heart, and deep love for God's people that Paul models to us here.

Every word Paul uses to describe his relationship with the Christians at Philippi, reflects the portrait of Jesus (2:5-11). His passion for them to grow in likeness to Jesus fills his whole being. "His pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ" (Lightfoot) as though Christ were expressing his love through the personality of his servant".

Application – What's In Your Picture?

This kind of love is possible, but supernatural. It's a love that's learnt, as we gaze and study the portraits Paul paints.

HIS PRAYER – 1:3, 9-11

To love & glorify – 1:9-11

Paul's prayer has two major goals.

1. That we would know and love God's knowledge (1:9).
2. That we would be able to apply God's knowledge to choices we make (1:10).

Paul's first prayer reveals a deep dependence. If God's people are to live pure and blameless lives, then it's vital they have God's knowledge buzzing in their heads and hearts (1:9). When their thinking is controlled by God knowledge, their choices will reflect Jesus character (1:10), and not the crooked and depraved generation they are living in (2:15).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

How can our youth group learn to pray for each other in the way Paul models to us here?

What do Jesus like choices look like for our young people?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

1. Read Philippians 1:1-12

See how many different ways Paul describes our identity as Christians.

What matters to Paul and what doesn't matter to him?

How does Paul avoid any self-pity?

How does this challenge you?

2. How do these titles clash with our culture?

1:1 SERVANTS = One who gives their complete obedience to Jesus.

1:1 GOD'S HOLY PEOPLE = Separation not segregation. Separated by obedience to God

3. What should attract a Christian to being a servant and holy? Look up 2:5-11 & 1 Corinthians 6:20

4. Why is partnership so important? Read 1:5, 2:15.

5. In what way is Paul an example of the character a gospel partner should have. Look up 1:3, 7-8.

6. What is at the heart of Paul's prayer for the Philippian church Read 1:9-11?

Spend time in praying Paul's prayer for each other.

EVERYWHERE A MISSION FIELD

(1:12–30)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

1:12 Palace Guard = Elite group of Roman soldiers.

1:15 Envy, rivalry, selfish ambition = An attitude towards Paul that symbolises “friction, a vivid image of the painful rubbing of iron chains on a prisoners’ legs and hands”. *R. P. Martin*

1:20 Eagerly expect and hope = “The craning of the neck to catch a glimpse of what lies ahead”
R. P. Martin

Focus on one thing to the exclusion of all else.

1:21 To live is Christ and to die is gain = Whatever happens to me, Christ is glorified therefore I am a winner.

1:23 Depart = A military term for leaving basecamp.

1:25 Joy = An attitude that judges the reality of God’s love by what he’s promised, and not by life’s current circumstances.

1:27 Worthy of the gospel = Living together as gospel partners.

1:27 Stand firm = Unity in action.

1:27 Striving together as one = “A word used to describe fighters in the gladiatorial struggle of life and death.” *R. P. Martin*.

Trained spearman who fought side by side.

1:27 As one for the faith = “As one man with one mind.” *R. P. Martin*

1:28 Frightened = “The word Paul uses describes an uncontrollable stampede of horses.” *R. P. Martin*

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Last session Paul introduced to us the dominant theme of his book ‘joyful partnership’. Paul calls the Philippian Christians to understand three essential truths about themselves.

Your Identity – 1:1–2, 5–6

Understand who you belong to.

Your Saviour – 1:3, 7

Understand that endurance is only possible through developing a close relationship with Jesus.

Your Prayers – 1:9–11

Understand that joyful gospel partners learn to trust that God will give them wisdom to make right choices.

In today’s passage Paul paints two portraits.

1. Paul chained in a Roman prison cell

2. A stampede of wild horses

These two portraits help us see how the truths of 1:1–12, Identity, Intimacy and Insight, worked within a gospel community.

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Fear will not stop Paul from shining like a star, and holding out the word of truth.

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners
Youth: Live Worthy, Stand Firm, Stay United (1:27)

DEFINING IMAGE OR REPEATED PHRASE

Our identity resembles a jigsaw puzzle.

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

PORTRAIT ONE

A Stampede Of Suffering – 1:27–30

It may seem odd to begin the session at the end of the chapter, but in Paul’s summing up we find the key to the passage. The word that Paul uses to describe ‘fear’ (1:28), is a stampede of horses. This image is a perfect way to describe how a person feels when they are faced with circumstance completely out of their control. The great apostle is currently sitting in a filthy Roman cell, with iron chains around his hands and feet. He’s clearly suffering for following Jesus (1:13, 30), and knows that the Philippian Christians face the same (1:29–30). When the inevitable suffering arrives, Paul wants his gospel partners to respond in three ways. He wants them to live worthy, stand firm, and stay united (1:27). In 1:12–30, Paul models how we are to live worthy, stand firm and stay united.

SESSION TWO

Application – What's In Your Picture?

What examples can you think of where Christians around the world are facing the stampede of suffering?

Where do our young people face opposition and suffering today?

PORTRAIT TWO

1. PAUL'S CHAINS – 1:12–14

What's the picture?

The problem Paul is facing is pretty clear. The mission he's been given is to take the gospel to the gentile world Acts 9:15–16, but now he's banged up in a prison cell. The kind of questions fizzing in his mind may have been.

- a. *If God is in control – why am I here?*
- b. *How can being in a prison cell help God's mission.*
- c. *Why isn't God doing something?*

These are understandable and obvious questions. If Paul's portrait reflected a frustrated and agitated man, it would be understandable.

What's The Phrase?

The one phrase which sums up Paul's attitude and response is 'I want you to know'. Instead of seeing the prison cell and suffering as an obstacle to God's goal, Paul sees it as part of God's plan. Paul is happy to draw attention to his chains and suffering, as long as they're seen as the gateway to a gospel opportunity. As Paul paints the picture of his prison cell, he wants to draw attention to the soldier he's shared the gospel with and the massive impact it had upon the palace guard. It's a picture of gospel opportunities being taken, instead of a frustrated man in chains (1:12–13). Paul wants us to see his prison cell as his new mission field.

The other faces in the portrait are gospel partners. I think Paul would love us to use our imagination, and picture them looking in through the windows, as he shares the gospel with the Roman soldier. The faces that were once fearful of the stampede, are now full of confidence (1:14). When gospel partners look at Paul, they see him believing two important truths which help them **live** worthy, **stand** firm and **stay** united.

- a. *A confidence that God's mission is not hampered by Paul's imprisonment*
- b. *The gospel is bigger than Paul.*

Application – What's In You Picture?

What circumstance in my life fooled me into thinking that God's mission can be stopped? When do I believe that certain people, organisation's, etc are bigger than the gospel?

2. PAUL'S CHURCH – 1:15–18

What's the picture?

When your enemy whacks you in chains, the picture may look brutal, but not confusing, for the Roman machine hated everyone who stood in their way. But when gospel partners act like enemies towards you, exhibiting 'selfish ambition' and 'stirring up trouble' (1:15, 17), feeling confused is the obvious emotion. So how will Paul respond to their wrong motives and selfish behaviour?

What's The Phrase?

We could understand if Paul threw his toys out of the pram, and sent these guys a stinging letter full of justified anger and pent-up rebukes. Instead, Paul uses the phrase 'what does it matter'. It's not that Paul's scared of calling out their sin and selfish motives, he's clearly doing that. It's just that there's something bigger than getting instant justice and avoiding humiliation. Even though their motives and actions are insincere, there're still preaching the gospel, so Paul rejoices (1:18). This response goes to the heart of what it means to be a gospel partner, for it points so clearly to the cross (2:7). Here Paul walks the same path, by accepting humiliation for the greater good, thus modelling how to live worthy, stand firm and stay united.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Why is Paul's attitude so striking?
How does Paul's attitude clash with our culture?
How does seeing the bigness of the gospel help you follow Paul?

3. PAUL'S COMPASS – 1:19–26

What's the picture?

When Paul thinks of the journey his life is taking the compass points in one direction (1:21, 23). The destination might be sure, but the route to heaven is far from straightforward. So how does Paul keep going, as he repeatedly faces the stampede of wild horses? Is his face full of fear, or is his heart full of something else?

What's The Phrase?

The phrase which sums up Paul's attitude is 'to live is Christ and to die is gain'. The hub and heart of Paul's life is his relationship with Christ, as shown in the verses below.

1:21 Paul's biggest fear is being unfaithful to the one he loves.

1:21 Paul wants Christ exalted in his body whether he lives or dies.

1:22-23 Paul's love for Christ leads to a desire to be with him now.

1:24-26 If he remains on earth, then he wants to produce Christ like fruit in other gospel partners.

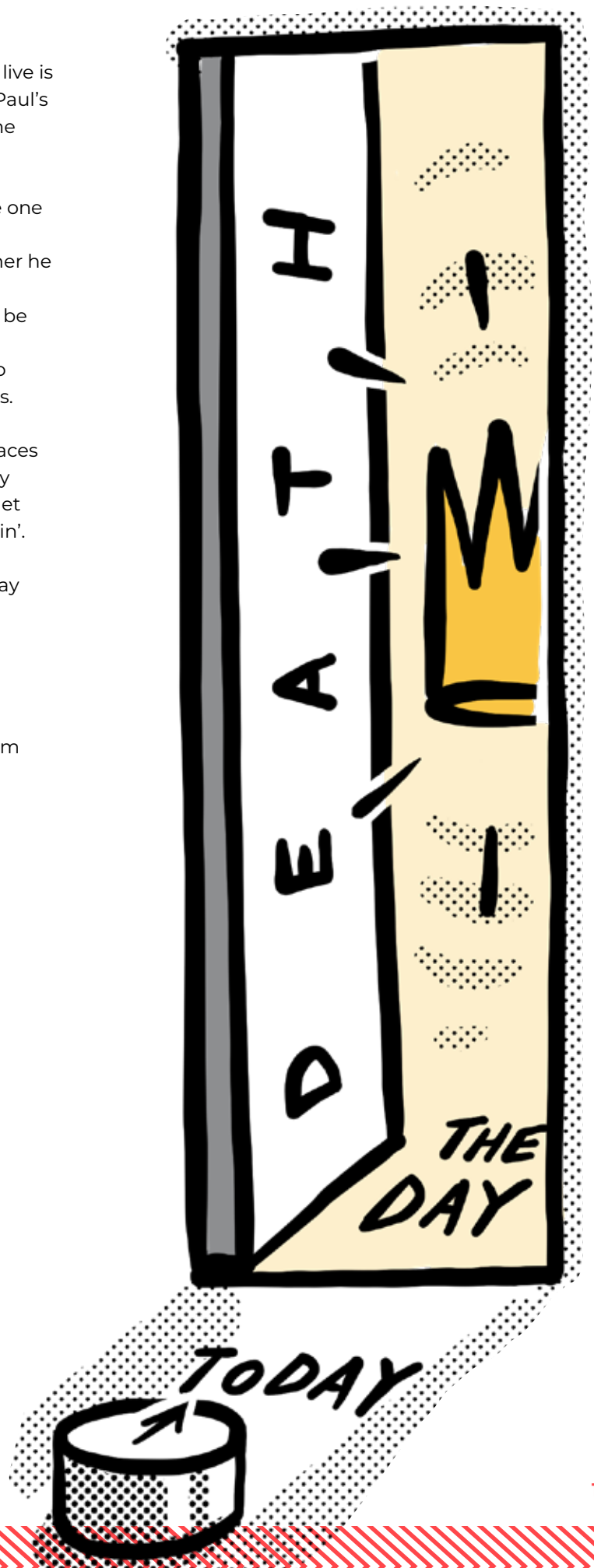
This attitude completely dominates how Paul faces his future. The stampede of horses will definitely appear again, and when they do, they will be met with this phrase 'to live is Christ and to die is gain'. It's Paul's relationship and love for Christ that motivates him to live worthy, stand firm, and stay united.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

How would you describe your relationship with Jesus?

How does Paul's relationship with Jesus help him face the stampede of wild horses?

How can you help fellow partners to love Jesus more?



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

1. Read Philippians 1:12–14

Why did Paul want the Philippians (and then us) to know about his prison experience?

What matters to Paul and what doesn't matter to him?

How does Paul avoid any self-pity?

How does this challenge you?

2. Read Philippians 1:15–18

Who is opposing Paul here? What is it that motivates them?

3. What stops Paul from becoming bitter?

What keeps him rejoicing?

4. Read Philippians 1:19–26

Paul imagines two possible outcomes for himself. What are they? Which does he “choose” and why?

5. What gives Paul such deep confidence?

6. What would it mean for you to go on living? How could God use you?

7. Can you say with Paul, “to die is gain”? Why?

8. Do you know the stories of Christians in the past who faced death for the sake of Christ?

9. Read Philippians 1:27–30

Can you think of examples of opposition to Christians or the gospel or the church that would make you afraid?

10. Paul is talking here specifically about suffering for the gospel. What issues or set of beliefs might lead to Christians being disliked, persecuted or even hated?

TRUE JOY (2:1–5)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

2:1 United with Christ = Every blessing from the life of Jesus is given to me.

2:1 Tenderness & compassion = Inner source of emotions.

2:2 Being like-minded = Thinking the same things about God's truth.

2:3 Selfish ambition = Acting like a gospel enemy.

2:3 Vain conceit = Empty self-seeking glory.

2:3 Humility = Maintaining a right view of God, yourself and others.

2:5 Same mindset as Christ Jesus = Refusing to hold onto life, but instead being ready to sacrifice it for others.

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

In 2:1–11, Paul wants us to move from his self-portrait, to Jesus. He is convinced that when we look at Jesus we will be encouraged and changed.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Last session Paul encouraged the Philippian Christians not to be fearful of the opposition they faced (1:28). The colourful image Paul used to describe fear, was a stampede of wild horses. When those wild horses appear on the horizon, Paul wants the Christians in Philippi to respond in three ways, to live worthy, stand firm, and stay united (1:27). Last session Paul tried to show us how to live this out practically (1:12–26).

Portrait 1 – 1:12–14

Paul wants the Philippian Christians to know that nothing will prevent the gospel moving forward, not even his imprisonment. Paul shows that 'whatever happens' (1:17), the gospel will spread (1:12–13), and fellow gospel partners will be encouraged (1:14).

Portrait 2 – 1:15–18

In the next portrait Paul models how to deal with opposition from the inside. Instead of focusing upon his own pain, he trains himself to see the bigness of God's gospel (1:15–18). As long as the gospel is preached by his opponents, Paul rejoices (1:18), and continues to live worthy, stand firm and stay united.

Portrait 3 – 1:19–26

The final self-portrait concerns how Paul views his uncertain future. We know that Paul's already been beaten black and blue for sharing the 'good news' of Jesus. This kind of treatment will undoubtedly be repeated when Paul gets out of his prison cell. So how will he continue to live worthy, stand firm and stay united? The great apostle shows how his relationship with Jesus governs, directs and controls his uncertain future. If God chooses to keep him alive, then he will continue to live worthy, stand firm and stay united, as his saviour would (1:24–26).

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners
Youth: Live Worthy, Stand Firm,
Stay United (1:27)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

LEARNING TO LOOK – 2:1–2

ONE EXPECTATION – 2:1

When gospel partners look at his portrait of Jesus, Paul expects them to be encouraged. As the Philippian Christians look at the brilliance

SESSION THREE

of Christ, Paul expects them to be changed, at the very centre of their being. The words 'tenderness and compassion' point to the part of us that makes decisions, the real you, our very soul. When a gospel community gazes at Christ, the Spirit takes what we see, to help us live worthy, stand firm and stay united.

This takes us back to Paul's ability to rejoice even though he's facing enemies, and future suffering. Whatever Paul faced; his primary encouragement was always to look at Jesus first (1:20–21). His expectation for the Philippian Christians to do the same.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

What expectation do you have of being changed as you look at the portrait of Jesus?

ONE MIND

When gospel partners look at the portrait, Paul expects it to create a deep unity of mind. Clearly Paul wants to focus on behaviour (2:3), but before that comes thinking (2:5). Right thinking about Jesus is crucial if they are to live worthy, stand firm and stay united (1:27).

Application

Have you considered the link between thinking and behaviour?

Have you considered how looking at Jesus can radically change you?

ONE LOVE

Paul knows that living as unified gospel partners is incredibly hard. "Paul saw unity as a by-product of the great truths on which the gospel rests, but he did not see it as coming about automatically or effortlessly. It is 'natural' in relation to the gospel, but it will not 'come naturally' – only by effort, obedience and deliberate cultivation. For this reason, the truths of verse 1 lead into the exhortations of verse 2". Alec Motyer. As we look at the portrait in 2:6–11, Paul wants us to understand how Jesus approached relationships.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

What is the gauge we use to measure how we relate in all our different relationships?

PAUL'S COLOURS – 2:3–5

Now Paul wants to introduce to us the different colours he will use in creating his masterpiece.

THE UGLY COLOURS

Selfish ambition – Acting like a gospel enemy

If unity is to be achieved within the people of God, then anything that threatens it must be exposed and put to death. In Paul's mind he is probably thinking back to those with twisted motives (1:15–18), and the two gospel partners at loggerheads Euodia and Syntyche (4:2). If gospel partners are to live worthy, stand firm and stay united (1:27), then these attitudes and behaviours have to be shown the door.

Vain conceit – Empty self-seeking

Unity will never be achieved if gospel partners think about themselves more than others.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Where do you see these attitudes and behaviours in the world today?

What makes them so ugly to a gospel community?

THE BEAUTIFUL COLOURS

Humility – Maintaining a right view of God, yourself and others

As we gaze at the Lord Jesus in 2:6–11, we understand what it looks like to love the Father, and other human beings. This will revolutionise all our relationships (2:5).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

When was the last time you realised your behaviour was the opposite to the Lord Jesus? What did you do?

Interests of the others

The mark of the follower of Jesus, is to constantly put others needs before your own.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

What's the difference between doing something out of duty, or doing something out of love and devotion? As we look at the portrait of Jesus, which should it be, duty or love?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

READ PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

1. What is Paul's number one aim when he paints this portrait of Jesus. Look up 1:1, 5,27, 2:5
2. What is Paul's expectation of the Philippian Christians when they gaze at the portrait? Look up 2:1-2
3. Do you think that's a right expectation of you and your mates in your youth group?
4. What do you think Paul means by one mind and the same love? Look up 2:1-2
5. How is it possible for God's people to think and love in the same way, while not becoming like robots or clones?
6. Where do you see these attitudes and behaviours in the world today? What makes them so ugly to a gospel community? Look up 2:3-4
7. What's the difference between doing something out of duty, or doing something out of love and devotion?
8. What should it be for a Christian, duty or love?

SERVING LIKE THE SON (2:5–8)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

2:5 Same mindset as Christ Jesus
= Refusing to hold onto life, but instead being ready to sacrifice it for others.

2:6 Used to his own advantage =
“Total personal commitment, and complete subjection.” A. Motyer

Leaving everything on the pitch.

2:7 Human likeness = To live within the limits of a human body.

2:8 Obedient to death = Only the divine can choose to be obedient to death, everyone else has no choice.

2:9 Exalted to the highest place =
The reward for his obedience and sacrifice.

2:11 Glory = The greatness of God's character on public display.

2:11 To the glory of God the Father = “God the Father staking his whole reputation on his Son.”
A. Motyer

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

The secret to living worthy, standing firm and staying united (1:27), is to gaze at the portrait of Jesus. When we look at him our thinking changes (2:5), which leads to behaviour change (2:6–11).

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Thinking like Jesus (2:5) – leads to acting like Jesus (2:6–8).

DEFINING IMAGE OR REPEATED PHRASE

A portrait of Christ.

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners

Youth: Serve like Jesus (2:2)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

THE SHOCK

Philippians 2:6, 7, 8

One of the problems with teaching this passage to Christian young people is familiarity. The doctrine of Jesus deity may seem straightforward and normal to us, but for Jews at the time of Jesus it was a stoning offence. Even today the deity of Jesus is still the main doctrine that divides Christians and other major religions. It's therefore really important that we understand this passage clearly, and teach it to our young people with clarity.

'Being in very nature God'

Here Paul is teaching clearly that the Lord Jesus in his very nature is God. 'To possess inwardly and display outwardly the very nature of God' A. Motyer. The thought that the creator would choose to become a creature, with all the limitations it would bring, should shock us.

'Did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage'

Here Paul wants us to hear the echo coming from Genesis 1–3. In the Garden of Eden, mankind was the climax of God's creation, for they were his image bearers. The role God gave them was to rule his world, under His loving command. Tragically Adam and Eve choose to rebel against God's command, and instead put themselves in the place of God.

As a human being the Lord Jesus never used his limitless power for his own advantage. When we read the gospels, the Lord Jesus is always using his power to serve, as he feeds the hungry, heals the sick and forgives those broken by sin.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Jesus' deity is a crucial doctrine
 Like Adam and Eve we grab at power
 The next two points have their greatest impact
 when we understand

- Who Jesus is
- How he used his power

THE SERVANT**Philippians 2:7**

When Paul considers the life of the Lord Jesus, the best word to describe him is servant. But what does he mean when he says 'he became nothing'; NIV or 'emptied himself' ESV? "We should see the idea of 'emptying', therefore, not in its logical implication of discarding something, but rather, in the light of Isaiah 53:12, 'He poured out his soul to death', with the double idea of total personal committal, and complete personal subjection". A. Motyer To use a modern sporting phrase, 'he left nothing on the pitch'. When it came to serving others, he 'emptied himself', for he'd given 'everything'.

The eternal Son of God chose to be the servant of every human being he met. Instead of using his limitless power to dominate, manipulate, and gain the upper hand, he instead used it to serve the needs of others. He lived out 2:3-4 completely, never harbouring selfish ambition, but instead always serving the needs of others.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

A follower of Jesus will be marked by serving the needs of others.

THE SACRIFICE**Philippians 2:8**

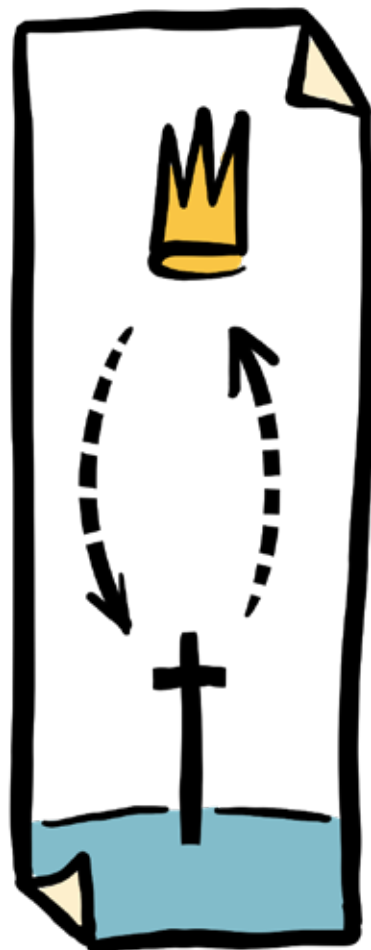
The way the Lord Jesus served was unique, for he was the saviour of the world. His death was to pay the price for our rebellion, so that we could be forgiven and restored to a new relationship with God. For the Jew the cross pointed to a divine curse, (Dt 21:22-23), and the Roman citizen, a complete humiliation. The Lord Jesus is prepared to become both these things, so that God's wrath can be satisfied.

This truth should shock us, as the he Lord Jesus, chooses to die. As eternal God he did not need to die, and as a sinless human being he did not deserve to die. Yet he chooses to die to serve our great need to be forgiven.

The goal of his service was unique, but not the model of being a servant. The Lord Jesus calls all his followers to a servant lifestyle. "Here then is the Christian's Model. He turned His back, voluntarily, deliberately, and decisively, upon all that belonged to personal glory, and all that conduced to personal gain. He recognised no limit to the existent to which His obedience to God in self-humbling must go, Whatever He found in Himself to be expendable, He spent. While anything was left which could be poured forth, He poured it out. Nothing was too small to give, or too great". A. Motyer

Application – What's In Your Picture?

We are never more like Jesus, than when we are serve others.



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

1. What is the purpose of Paul painting this portrait of Jesus, 2:5?
2. What should right thinking about Jesus lead to?
3. What is shocking about Jesus becoming a human being 2:6,8?
4. How do people use their power today?
5. How is that different to Jesus 2:7?
6. In which areas of your life is God calling you to sacrificially serve others 2:8?

EXALTING LIKE THE FATHER (2:1–5, 9–11)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

2:5 Same mindset as Christ Jesus = Refusing to hold onto life, but instead being ready to sacrifice it for others.

2:6 Used to his own advantage = Total personal commitment, and complete subjection. A. Motyer. Leaving everything on the pitch.

2:7 Human likeness = To live within the limits of a human body.

2:8 Obedient to death = Only the divine can choose to be obedient to death, everyone else has no choice.

2:9 Exalted to the highest place = The reward for his obedience and sacrifice.

2:11 Glory = The greatness of God's character on public display.

2:11 To the glory of God the Father = "God the Father staking his whole reputation on his Son." A. Motyer

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

This morning we looked at the mind of Jesus (2:5–8), today Paul wants to shift our focus to the Father's mind.

What does the Father think about the Son's servant nature and obedience to the cross?

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

If we think like Jesus, we will serve like Jesus.

If we think like the Father, we exalt Jesus

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners

Youth: Exalt like The Father (1:27)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

INTRODUCTION

The first important word is 'therefore'. This links the mind and actions of God the Son, to those of the Father. What does the Father think of Jesus becoming a human being and living like a servant? What does the Father think of Jesus choosing to die upon a cross, so that we could be redeemed. The answer to these questions goes to the very heart of what the Father most values, and the example we must follow.

When we face a difficult doctrine, we can often think that God's communication is fuzzy and unclear. Often this approach says more about a person's unwillingness to obey God, than it does about the clarity of God's communication. Just as the actions of Jesus were clear last session, so now with the Father.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT

Our approach to this passage must take into account the character of God as revealed in the Old Testament.

Here are two key truths to consider as we look at 2:9–11.

GOD'S GLORY

Our definition of 'glory' is 'the greatness of God's character on public display'. This word is full of truth and meaning, as revealed below.

Isaiah 42:8 – God will not, in fact cannot, share his glory with anyone else, for no one else is like Him. No one shares his divine character, therefore no one else deserves to be praised. He is the creator, and everything else is the created. For a human being to give glory to anyone or anything other than God is idolatry.

SESSION FIVE

Isaiah 48:11 – The best thing God could give us is himself, for he is God. That cannot be said of any human being, for they are fallen and limited creatures.

Application

We have a God who cannot share his glory with another. It is not only totally against his character, but unloving towards his creation to do so.

GOD'S NAME

In the Bible, names are crucially important, for they reveal a person's nature and character as we see in these verses

Isaiah 12:4-5 – The proclamation of God's name is cemented to what he's done. His name and deeds are so great they must be proclaimed to the whole world.

Isaiah 26:7-9 – The language Isaiah uses here is love language. The name of God reminds you of his character and work. With that in mind, you desire and long to know and love him above all things.

Isaiah 50:9-11 – The child of God trusts completely in the name of God to guide and vindicate them.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

To accept that God is the only one who can be praised is totally consistent with his being.

It's with this Old Testament framework that we approach Paul's portrait in 2:8-11.

THE GREATEST PLACE – 2:9

The Father's response to the servant character and obedience of Jesus is to 'exalt' and glorify him. When the Father considers the Son's humility in giving of himself sacrificially, he exalts him to the highest place. When the Father considers the Son's obedience in going to the cross, he exalts him to His right hand. This is the consistent message throughout the whole New Testament (Acts 2:33, 5:31, 7:55, Romans 8:34, Eph 1:20, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3, 13, 8:1, 12:2, 1 Pet 3:22).

Application – What's In Your picture?

We have seen from the Old Testament that it's totally against God's character to share his glory with anyone, yet here he clearly does. It is right to emphasise two important points.

Firstly, this confirms the deity of the Lord Jesus as we saw in the first portrait of (2:6). Secondly, this challenges what we truly value. If we want to know the very essence of what it means for God to be God, we look to the cross, for there the Son is glorified (2:11). If we want to know what God rewards and celebrates, we look to the servant life of Jesus. When broken and sinful gospel partners follow Jesus' example, they shine like stars in a warped and crooked generation (2:15). "God says, "Give me a man who will go the whole way in self humbling, and in that man, I will be glorified". *A.Motyer*. This is the example we are called to follow.

THE GREATEST NAME – 2:9-10

Having exalted Jesus to the highest place, the Father now grants him the greatest name. As before, we are to see this in the light of the Old Testament background where God's name is cemented to his character and deeds. The Son's reward for his servant character and sacrificial obedience, is a 'name that's above every name'. "The name given is Yahweh, the personal name of God himself. We know his name is Jesus, but God adds the name LORD (2:11), which is fundamental". *A.Motyer*

Here Paul is directly quoting Isaiah 45:23. This Old Testament context takes us back once again to the character of God. His name alone is the one that all people will one day confess and bow their knee to. Paul's portrait is stunning, as we see the Father reward the Son with the highest place and the greatest name.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

In a world where the name of God is ridiculed and scoffed, here we see the mind of God the Father. One day, all people will honour the servant character of Jesus.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

1. What do you think is meant by the word glory?
Look up Isaiah 42:8, 48:11
2. How much importance do names have in our culture? How is this different from Bible times?
Look up Isaiah 12:4-5, 7-9, 50:9-11
3. How is the way the Father rewards the Son 2:9, linked to his character and obedience 2:6-8, Acts 2:33, 5:31?
4. How does God's exaltation of Jesus change the way you understand and respond to Jesus' servant character and sacrificial obedience?
5. Think back to what Isaiah said about God's name. How does this apply to 2:9-10? Also look up Isaiah 42:23
6. How does the name the Father gives the Son change the way you understand and respond to Jesus' servant character and sacrificial obedience?

GOD AT WORK (2:12-18)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

2:12 Continue to work out your salvation = God's people together gazing at the portrait of Jesus and then working out what it looks like in daily life.

2:12 Fear & trembling
= Humble reliance

2:14 Grumbling = Selfish complaining in public.

2:15 Blameless = A life of integrity, leaving people with no opportunity to point the finger.

2:15 Pure = Unmixed, a life without compromise.

2:15 Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky = The result of a blameless & pure life.

2:15 Warped and crooked generation = Inwardly twisted outwardly distorted.

2:16 'As you hold out the word of life' = Can mean two things or both; Holding onto the Word of God – Personal loyalty and obedience to the Word of God. Holding out – The word that saved you, is the word you offer to the world.

2:16 I will be able to boast on the day of Christ = Rejoicing that he's got the Philippian Christians over the finishing line.

2:17 Poured out like a drink offering = The violent martyrdom that Paul would soon face.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Two Portraits

In the last two sessions Paul has painted two stunning portraits.

Portrait One (2:5)

As Paul's brushes hit the canvas, we saw three great truths that marked the Lord Jesus.

2:6-8 – His nature is both human and divine

2:6 – He chooses to be a servant

2:8 – He chooses obedience, and that means dying upon a cross

Portrait Two

The second portrait put the spotlight firmly on how the Father responds to the Son's servant hearted obedience. The Father's response is one of praise and glory. As he watches His Son's servant hearted obedience, he rewards him with two things.

2:9 – The greatest place

2:9 – The greatest name

Our Responsibility

The Son is so great that one day every human being will confess his name, and bow their knee (2:10-11)

Today's portrait focuses upon our response (2:3-4, 12-18).

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

God's work and our work combine, leading to lives that are pure and blameless.

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners

Youth: God Works, We Work (2:13)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

GOD'S WORK – 2:12-13

A Christians confidence comes from the assurance that it is God who is working in them. This has been a theme all the way through Philippians.

1:6

- A Christian's salvation is God's initiative.
- The one who started the work, will finish the work.
- God's faithfulness to his work in a believer, is as sure as the Day of Judgement.

1:19

- The prayers of God's people, and the Spirit of Jesus, give Paul confidence to face suffering.
- The very words 'for it is God who works in you' are mind blowing.
- The one who sustains the world, chooses to work in us.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

God's number one aim is to help us think (2:5) and act like Jesus (2:6–8), which for a young person can seem an impossible task. The words 'for it is God who works in you' should give a young person confidence and encouragement (2:13).

YOUR WORK – 2:3–4,12, 14–15

The faithfulness of God is designed to breed a desire to follow Jesus example with 'fear and trembling'(humble reliance) (2:12). Here Paul uses four words which help us to understand our work.

Arguing

Inward thought that leads to outward disputing and discussion.

An example of vain glory 2:3

Grumbling

Selfish complaining in public

An example of selfish ambition

Not considering others above yourself 2:3–4

Here Paul begins with the negative character traits that should not be found in a follower of Jesus.

When the world looks at God's people, they should see a radical difference. Yet when we get to the end of Philippians we find two gospel partners Euodia and Syntyche arguing and grumbling. This kind of behaviour destroys the opportunity for God's people to live worthy, stand firm and stay united (1:27)

Application – What's In Your Picture?

These two words describe the warped and crooked generation that God's people are called to reach (2:15). Whether it's in the playground, class room or social media platforms, this kind of culture dominates. So, how can our young people shine like stars in this kind of world?

Blameless – A life of integrity, leaving people with no opportunity to point the finger.

Pure – Unmixed, a life without compromise.

Living a blameless and pure life, can only be done within a gospel community (1:27). When the world looks at a Christian's, they should detect a radical

difference. A group of people who can be trusted, for their lives are marked by truth and integrity. When a young person has a Christian friend, they should see a quality of friendship that's marked by generosity and selflessness. "It is the positive attempt to follow the Lord Jesus in a life of unswerving obedience to God. Therefore, the Christian must have obedience as his primary characteristic. It is not dependent upon other conditions being fulfilled. Indeed, it is irrespective of all other conditions". A.Motyer

Application – What's In Your Picture?

All along, Paul's one aim is for the Philippian believers to 'shine like stars' (2:15). When a community of gospel partners together live lives that are marked by a servant hearted commitment to the good of others, an impact will be made. When God's people live blameless and pure lives, opposition may still be there, but what will be absent is the accusation of hypocrisy. They may not like our message, but they can't deny that we live it out. Opposition yes, but no pointing finger. Our lives, are the bargaining chips we have to gain a hearing for the 'word of life' (2:16).

PAUL'S WORK – 2:16–18

We have seen that a Christlike character is shaped by two things, God's work, and our response (2:12–13). Here Paul outlines his role.

What it costs him

When we look at the life of Paul, we quickly see that gospel fruit and sacrifice go together. A quick glance at the book of Acts reveals this first-hand (Acts 16:11–40). Again, we see Paul as the model gospel partner (2:17), following in the footsteps of Jesus (2:8).

How he responds

When Paul sees the work of God in the lives of the Philippian Christians, he realises the sacrifice is worthwhile (2:16). Seeing the work of God in gospel partners makes Paul boast and rejoice in the gospel (2:16–18).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Gospel advance and sacrifice always go together. If our young people are to make an impact for Christ, then it will inevitably involve suffering of some sort.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:12–18

1. A Christian is to follow the example of the Lord Jesus in being a humble servant 2:5–8. Why are these verses a huge encouragement to every Christian? Please look up Phil 1:6, 19, 29, 2:13
2. Thinking about the letter so far, what sorts of attitudes and actions will be involved in “working out your own salvation”? Think back to the 1:18, 2:1–4.
3. What areas of your own life, and in the public domain, do you see these two things present:
Arguing – Inward thought that leads to outward disputing and discussion. An example of vain glory 2:4
Grumbling – Selfish complaining in public. An example of selfish ambition and not considering others above yourself 2:3–4
When are you tempted to argue and grumble? What about? Why? What is going on in your heart?
4. Write yourself a ‘post-it note from Paul’ explaining why you should not argue or grumble.
5. Read again Phil 2:3–4, 5–8. What is attractive when a follower of Jesus lives like this? What will offend people when a follower of Jesus lives like this?
Blameless – A life of integrity, leaving people with no opportunity to point the finger
Pure – Unmixed, a life without compromise
6. Read 2:14–16
Why is living like this so important?
7. What did it cost Paul to see the Philippian church born and then grow? Read 2:16–18, & Acts 16:11–40
8. What might it cost you?

SKETCHES OF A GOSPEL PARTNER (2:19–30)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus = Solid trust in God, even if present circumstances point to something different.

2:20 Genuine concern for your welfare = Deep concern for their needs above his own.

2:20 No one else like him = Key man that Paul depended upon. Close human friendship.

2:22 Proved himself = Tested and approved.

2:22 As a son with his father he served with me = Following Paul's example of dedication and submitting all your talents and energy to spread of the gospel.

2:25 Epaphroditus = Charming.

2:26 Distressed = "Confused, restless, half distracted."
J. B. Lightfoot

2:29 Honour = Look up to.

2:30 Risked his life = 'He threw down his life like a gambler's stake' He staked all on Jesus, knowing he could not fail'.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW Paul reflects the Father

The dominant theme in chapter two has been the portrait of the Father and Son (2:6–11). Either side of the portrait, Paul has called gospel partners to follow Jesus' example (2:1–4), (12–18).

Today, Paul wants to show us two sketches of gospel partners who thought (2:5), and lived like Jesus.

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Two examples of what it means to live worthy, stand firm, and stay united (1:27).

Two examples of what it means to be a servant like Jesus (2:1–5)..

CHANT

Leader: What did Tim do?

Youth: Live for others (2:20)

Leader: What did E do?

Youth: Risk all for Jesus (2:27)

Leader: What will you do?

Youth: Serve like Jesus

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

TIMOTHY – A SKETCH

Four things mark the portrait of God the Father and God The Son
2:5–11

1. The Father's generosity in giving of his Son
2. The Son leaves heaven to be a servant on earth
3. The Son chooses to sacrifice his own life
4. The Father exalts the Son for his servant hearted sacrifice

A Son

Four things mark the sketch of Timothy (2:19–24)

1. Paul's generosity in sending Timothy to the Philippian church (2:19,22–23)
2. Timothy's readiness to leave Paul and go to Philippi
3. Timothy's life is marked by sacrifice (2:20–21).
4. Paul praises Timothy for his servant lifestyle (2:20–22).

Application

Here Paul models the generosity that's at the heart of the gospel.

Just as the Father gives the Son, so Paul gives Timothy.

Paul exalts what the Father exalts, a life lived for others.

A Father

What's clear from these verses is the deep relationship Paul has with Timothy. As we read, we see that Paul is both his



SESSION SEVEN

spiritual father and fellow servant (2:22). When we watch Paul in Acts, it's clear that serving with him was a dangerous business (Acts 16:22–24). A truth that's been highlighted throughout Philippians 1:13, 17. 1:29.

Application

Paul's example clearly had a life changing effect on Timothy.

Consider who is your spiritual Father in the faith?

An Example

Paul uses three phrases to reveal the brilliance of Timothy's example.

'No one else like him'

It's difficult to think of any higher praise from Paul than this. It's a little like the Father declaring that Jesus' name is the greatest (2:9).

'Who shows genuine concern for your welfare'
Timothy's genuine love and concern for the Christian's in Philippi, leads to high praise from Paul.

For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

When Paul wrote 2:3–4 his thoughts may well have been fixed on Timothy. When Paul thinks of Timothy, the first word that comes into his mind is servant. Most fellow gospel partners, sadly think of themselves before they think of others. But that's not the case with Timothy. As far as Paul is concerned, Timothy has proved himself, not in gifts or talents, but in serving others before himself (2:20–22).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

WWTD – What Would Timothy Do?

It's been a long week at school and you are shattered. You go to youth on Friday because your mates go, and you like the Bible teaching. The evening's going really well, as you catch up with friends. There's a new young person whose been sitting on their own for about ten minutes. What would Timothy do?

EPAPHRODITUS – THE SKETCH

Four things mark the portrait of God the Father and God The Son. 2:5–11

1. The Father's generosity in giving of his Son
2. The Son leaves heaven to be a servant on earth



3. The Son chooses to sacrifice his own life
4. The Father exalts the Son for servant hearted sacrifice

Four things mark the sketch of Epaphroditus

1. Paul's generosity is seen by the sending of Epaphroditus (2:25,28).
2. Epaphroditus is prepared to return to Philippi (2:25).
3. Epaphroditus risks his life (2:30).
4. Paul calls us to honour people like Epaphroditus (2:29).

A Fellow Soldier and Co Worker

Paul's relationship with Epaphroditus and Timothy is the same, teacher/pupil, mentor/follower. Add to that the fact that Paul was an apostle and one of the early church's top two leaders. Yet when the great apostle describes himself, it's clearly not in lofty terms, for he's Epaphroditus' brother, co-worker and fellow soldier (2:25). In Christian leadership, the foundation for true equality comes from the cross, which teaches us two fundamental truths.

We follow a servant leader (2:6–9).

We are broken sinners who need a saviour

These two truths dominate how Paul views himself, and those who follow and look up to him. "Here is true Christian generosity: to recognise Timothy's service as equal to his own (2:22), to commend Epaphroditus to the praise & honour of the church, not alarmed lest his own praise & honour from that quarter should be diminished, or the limelight captured by someone else". *A.Motyer*

A Risk Taker

One of the important things that Paul draws our attention to when it comes to Epaphroditus, is that he's a risk taker (2:30). 'He threw down his life like a gambler's stake' He staked all on Jesus, knowing he could not fail'. A. Motyer

He chooses to love

As with Timothy so with Epaphroditus, it's not gifts or talents that Paul focuses upon, but sacrificial love. It's clear that Epaphroditus' love has led him to being distressed, (2:26).

The great writer C. S. Lewis helps us understand Christian love:

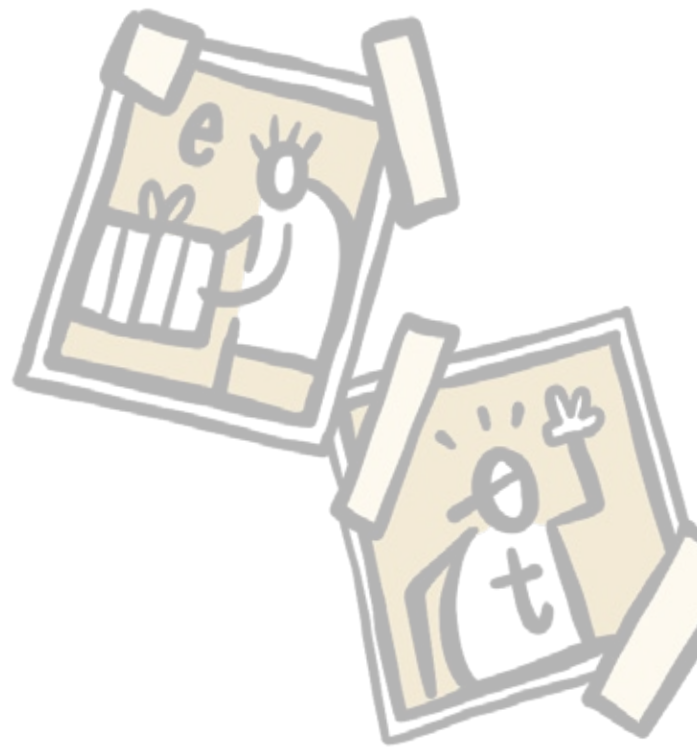
"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."

It's clear that Epaphroditus' heart is 'wrung and possibly broken'. His love for Paul and the Philippian believers nearly cost him his life (2:29). Yet it's this kind of person Paul wants the Philippian Christians to honour, for he reflects most clearly the portrait of Jesus (2:28–29). "Such a word brings its own challenge and rebuke to an easy-going Christianity which makes no stern demands, and calls for no limits of self-denying, self-effacing sacrifice". A. Motyer

Application– What's In Your Picture?

WWPD – What Would Paul Do?

A discussion / debate begins in the school classroom about who young people most admire and desire to emulate. For some it's sports men and women, for others it's those who have made a success of their lives through business or careers. The spotlight suddenly turns to you, and you're asked who you most admire ...



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

PORTRAIT ONE – TIMOTHY MY SON (2:19–30)

1. In the portrait, what kind of relationship does Paul have with Timothy?

Why are these verses a huge encouragement to every Christian?

Please look up Phil 1:6, 19, 29, 2:13

2. What did it mean to be a servant of the gospel with Paul 2:22?

Read the story of how the church at Philippi was born Acts 16:11-40

It's the gospel that leads to Paul being in prison 1:13, 17

Serving the gospel with Paul = suffering (Phil 1:29)

3. What is it about Timothy that Paul values?

'No one else like him'

'Who shows genuine concern for your welfare'

'Proved himself in loving others before himself'

4. What are the similarities between this portrait and that of Jesus?

PORTRAIT 2 – EPAPHRODITUS THE RISK TAKER (2:25–30)

5. How does Paul describe Epaphroditus?

Brother
Co-worker
Fellow soldier

6. What caused Epaphroditus distress, and what does that show about how he viewed God's people at Philippi??

Distress = Describes Jesus' emotion in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33, Matthew 26:37)

7. In what ways does this quote from C. S. Lewis describe Epaphroditus' relationship with Paul and the Christians at Philippi?

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."

8. What would it look like for you to follow Epaphroditus' example?

9. What might it cost you?

JESUS MUZZLES THE DANGEROUS DOGS (3:1-14)

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Today's passage helps us understand how Paul deals with those who seek to offer something other than God's truth. The primary way Paul deals with this is to contrast what they say with the portrait of Jesus (2:5-11). The 'glory of Christ' has been Paul's theme all the way through his book so far.

Here's six crucial truths Paul has highlighted

1:1 = Jesus = Identity

The one from whom we get our identity

1:6 = Jesus = Salvation

The guarantor of our salvation

1:11 = Jesus = Change

The means of our fruitfulness

1:18 = Jesus = The Gospel

He is our message

1:20 = Jesus = Passion

The one who deserves our devotion

2:5-8 = Jesus = Our Example

The one we must think and act like

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

The "righteousness of Christ" outshines what the 'dangerous dogs' offer.

DEFINING IMAGE OR REPEATED PHRASE

Wild scavenging dogs

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners,
Who is righteous?

Youth: Jesus (3:9)



DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

3:1 Rejoice in the Lord = Let him alone make you happy. A Motyer

3:2 Dogs = Wild scavenger, who feeds off other people's rubbish.

3:2 Evildoers = A person who takes a stand against what God says is ethically and morally right.

3:2 Mutilators of the flesh = False teachers who claim that circumcision needs to be added to the perfect work of Jesus upon the cross.

3:3 We who are the true circumcision = The true, chosen people of God, who have his seal upon them.

3:3 Confidence in the flesh = To put your trust in your own achievement instead of Jesus' death upon the cross.

3:5 Circumcised on the eighth day = Requirement of an Old Testament law.

3:5 Law = The Torah, God's Word to His people in the Old Testament.

3:5 Pharisee = Israel's religious leader.

3:6 Faultless = A declaration that God's law had been kept.

3:7 Loss for the sake of Christ = Judging all I have in the light of Jesus' portrait (2:5-11)

3:8 Surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord = Approaching all suffering in the light of Jesus' portrait (2:5-11)

3:8 Garbage = Food waste, no good to anyone.

3:9 Righteousness = Two different 'righteousness' are presented here:
a. A complete trust in Christ's death.
b. Trust in your own achievements

3:12 Mature = Not the finished article but someone who's seeking to live out 3:12. The word mature used in 3:15 is taken from the athletics track.

3:12 I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me = "The more a person is satisfied with Christ, the more they will find their satisfaction in satisfying him."
A.Motyer

3:13 Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead = Refusing to let your past life affect how you see the present or the future.

SESSION EIGHT

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

Introduction

When we first read this passage, it can seem a little disconnected from the previous chapter. When we read it, we must imagine ourselves standing next to the brilliant portrait Paul has painted (2:6–11). As we gaze at Christ, we are reminded of his deity, sacrificial service, and exaltation by the Father. It's this portrait that Paul wants to fill our minds with 2:5, so we follow his example (2:3,14–15), and live a life of joy (3:1).

Today Paul wants to explore the danger of thinking and acting as if something could give you greater joy than Jesus (3:1).

THE DANGEROUS DOGS (3:1–4)

Definition of joy A conviction that only Jesus can meet your deepest needs, in this life and the next. The warning Paul gives is so important he mentions it many times (3:1). His one great fear is the Philippian Christians will be fooled into thinking true joy can be found outside of Jesus. This explains the strong language he uses to warn fellow Christians.

Dogs A wild scavenger, who feeds off other people's rubbish. The idea here is of a person who takes a set of beliefs, morality, or cultural narrative and promotes them in contrast to Jesus. They are like a scavenging dog, rummaging around their culture, trying to come up with something greater than Jesus. Their desire and passion is to lead people away from the joy that's found in Christ. The dangerous dogs attack God's people in two ways.

Evildoers A person who takes a stand against what God says is ethically and morally right. Firstly, they offer God's people a different lifestyle based upon desire 3:19. Just like Adam and Eve, they encourage people to judge reality by what they can see, feel and touch, instead of God's word.

Mutilators of the flesh False teachers who offer a different identity. Secondly, they offer God's people a different identity. This identity is based upon the Old Testament covenant, expressed through the sign of circumcision. The real people of God believe in the promises given to Abraham, expressed through circumcision. This is a skilful lie, for there's elements of truth within it. But what they have

chosen to ignore is Paul's portrait 2:6–11. The death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus bring in the New Covenant, which changes everything about the sign of circumcision.

Two Ways The New Covenant Changes The Meaning Of Circumcision:

1. Circumcision is no longer needed
2. Circumcision has no relationship to our new identity in Christ.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

The aim of the dangerous dogs is to disrupt gospel partnership 1:5, and to prevent us from walking worthy, standing firm, and staying united 1:27. Clever lies and skilful tweaks and distortions of God's truth, is the way they work.

HOW PAUL BEGINS TO MUZZLE THE DOGS

We Have The Spirit (3:3)

As we gaze at the portrait of Jesus, the Holy Spirit takes what we see and radically changes us. Our new natures reject a life driven by desire (3:19), and chooses the mind of Jesus, (2:5), which leads to serving like Jesus (2:3–4, 14). The Spirit trains us to look at Jesus, which leads to serving like Jesus.

We Have A New Identity (3:3)

Identity has been a key theme in Philippians 1:1 – God's holy people = Separated by obedience to God
1:1 – Servants = A person who gives their complete obedience and all that they are to Jesus

Here Paul returns to the theme of identity. If a person trusts in Jesus, then they are the 'circumcision of God'. This sounds incredibly odd to our 21st century ears, but it's Paul's way of saying, you are the 'real people of God', and the dogs are not.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

The challenge we face as youth leaders is to work out who the dangerous dogs are in our culture. Who is offering an alternative lifestyle and identity today? In Paul's day the alternative lifestyle and identities were incredibly attractive for the Philippian Christians; the same applies today. This is why Paul is happy to repeat his warnings.

TEXT	JESUS	PAUL'S CV	DANGEROUS DOGS
3:8	Knowing Jesus as Lord	Paul's CV is garbage	
3:9	Christ's righteousness	My own righteousness	
2:6-8 3:10-11	Becoming like Jesus the sacrificial servant		Enemies of living like Jesus
3:12	The goal of Christlikeness		Live by desire and not Christ's example
3:13-14	Clean conscience which has dealt with the shame		

A Consuming Passion – 3:7-14

These verses are jam packed with Paul's consuming passion, to love and live for Jesus. "He is their divine obsession, the central concern of a one-track mind and a one-theme tongue. A people that finds their true and ultimate life satisfaction in him." A. Motyer. With the portrait of Jesus beside him, Paul joyfully compares and contrasts it with his own CV and all that the dangerous dogs have to offer.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

The greatest Biblical antidote to rejecting what the dangerous dogs offer, is to follow Paul's example. Paul's supreme confidence is in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. When we consistently present him to his people, then his glory will be seen. When his glory is seen, then his people will follow and worship.

Knowing Jesus (3:8)

In many ways this takes us back to the main theme of the book which is partnership (1:5). Salvation is to be brought into friendship with God, through Christ (2:6). That being the case, why would you want what the dangerous dogs offer?

Christ's Righteousness (3:9)

The dangerous dogs are offering a system that's based on our own personal achievement. Having been a devoted Jew, Paul knows that the purpose of the law is not to make us righteous, but instead to show you what righteousness is. When we look at Jesus, we see a human being who was completely righteous (2:8). The gospel invites us to share, know, and enjoy being hidden in Christ's righteousness. That being the case, why would you want what the dangerous dogs offer?

Christ's Example (2:6-8, 3:10-12)

The dangerous dogs are offering a lifestyle that's different from sacrificial service. A lifestyle where you choose who you serve, and how you serve. This is to reject the example of Jesus (2:6-8), and to discard the lifestyle that the Father exalts (2:9-11). That being the case, why would you want what the dangerous dogs offer?

Clear & Clean (3:13-14)

We know that Paul's previous life was full of violence and hatred of God's people (3:6). His new identity in Christ, gives him a new righteousness, therefore a completely different way to reflect on the past, and to consider the future. "Paul intends to forget his past in this sense. He will not regard it as having any bearing or influence upon his present spiritual outlook or conduct". R.P.Martin. That being the case, why would you want what the dangerous dogs offer?

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Paul's one consuming desire is to know and experience the brilliance and the beauty of the Lord Jesus. "The more a person is satisfied with Christ the more he will find his satisfaction in satisfying Him". A.Motyer. As we teach our young people, we must pray they follow Paul's example.



SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

READ PHILIPPIANS 3:1-14

Paul uses really strong language to describe certain people, and difficult phrases to describe what they believe.

Read the definitions below, which will help:

Joy = A conviction that only Jesus can meet your deepest needs, in this life and the next.

Dogs = A wild scavenger, who feeds off other people's rubbish

Evildoers = A person who takes a stand against what God says is ethically and morally right

Mutilators of the flesh = False teachers who offer a different identity

Confidence in the flesh = To put your trust in your own achievement instead of the cross.

-
1. What warning does Paul give in these verses?
 2. What are the dogs, evildoers and mutilators of the flesh offering?
 3. Who are our modern-day dogs, who offer a different lifestyle and identity?
 4. If we were to write our own list like Paul does in verse 5-6 what would be in it? Why are those "good things" actually rubbish?
 5. How does living for those things steal your joy in following Jesus?
 6. How does the Holy Spirit help us muzzle the dogs? Read 2:5-8, 3:3
 7. Why do you think Paul shares his CV. Read 3:4-7?
 8. How is Jesus better than what the dogs offer? Look up 2:5-8, 3:7-14

YOUR EXAMPLES & YOUR ENEMIES (3:13–21)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

3:15 Mature = Not the finished article but someone who's seeking to live out 3:12. The word mature used in 3:15 is taken from the athletics track. Fit, training, crowned as a victor, having attained the prize.

3:18 Enemies of the cross = A person who teaches that salvation is based on personal achievement rather than the cross of Jesus.

3:19 God is their stomach = A way of living where your appetites and not Jesus dictate how you live and the choices you make.

3:19 Glory is in their shame = A way of living where your appetites and not Jesus dictate how you live and the choices you make.

3:19 Earthly things = Your identity fixed to this world and all that it offers.

3:20 Citizenship is in heaven = Living now in the light of eternity. Your heavenly identity controlling how you live now

3:21 Lowly bodies = Our earthly fallen decaying body.

3:21 Glorious body = Our eternal, resurrected, therefore Christlike body.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Last time Paul warned us about 'dangerous dogs'; now he warns us about 'enemies of the cross'. When considering 'dangerous dogs', Paul wanted us to compare and contrast their message with the portrait of Jesus. Today, Paul's strategy is slightly different, as he calls us to follow his example (3:17).

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Paul calls us to follow his example Paul explains the world view of the enemies of the cross Paul explains the world view of those who love the cross

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners, who are yer?

Youth: Citizens of heaven (3:20)

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners, where are you heading?

Youth: Heaven (3:20)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

GOD'S WORK – 2:12–13

Throughout the book, Paul has painted different portraits.

1:12–14: Paul sharing the gospel with elite Roman soldiers

1:15–17: Christians with distorted and wrong motives

1:27: Christians standing as one

1:28: A herd of wild horses

2:6–8: Jesus, the obedient servant

2:9–11: The Father exalting the Son

2:19–24: Timothy, the disciple like no other

2:25–30: Epaphroditus, the gambler

3:1–14: Dangerous Dogs who attack the gospel

3:15–21: Enemies of the cross who hate the cross

The portrait of Jesus is his masterpiece, but the self portrait of Paul the most consistent.

The table on the following page shows how Paul's self-portrait weaves its way through the whole book.

In the New Testament, the apostles fulfil the same role as the Old Testament prophets (Eph 2:19–21). They are the eye-and ear-witnesses of all that Jesus said and did, therefore speak God's word to every generation. The role Paul plays extends even further, for he's the unique example we are all called to follow.

Yet Paul is clear that the idea of modelling Jesus and mentoring younger Christians is everyone's responsibility (2:29, 3:17). This is a huge part of what it means to be a youth leader, as we model what it means to be a follower of Jesus to the young people under our care.

SESSION NINE

1:3	Paul models committed prayer
1:7-8	Paul models how to love God's people
1:12-14	Paul models how to suffer for the gospel
1:15-18	Paul models how to deal with opposition from within
1:18-25	Paul models how to deal with opposition and persecution
2:1,5	Paul models how to look to the example of Jesus
2:19,25	Like the Father, Paul models how you give your best gospel partners away, so as to bless others
2:22	Paul models how to mentor young disciples
3:1-4	Paul shows how to expose false teachers
3:7-14	Paul models how to pursue likeness to Christ
3:17	Paul calls people to follow his example
4:1	Paul models how to love God's people
4:2-3	Paul models how to help Christians when they disagree
4:4-7	Paul models how to pray
4:9	Paul calls people to follow his example
4:10-13	Paul models how to live a contented lifestyle

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Every generation of young people looks for role models. The popularity of 'influencers' in our culture today reveals that to be the case. One of the main reasons Paul sends Timothy and Epaphroditus is to be a role model, an influencer (2:22, 29). It's right then that we ask our young people:

1. Who influences your thinking the most?
2. Who influences your behaviour the most?
3. Are there Christians you admire who you would like to emulate?

Your Enemy

Paul knows that every generation has influencers,

and today he wants to put the spotlight upon the impact they have. "There are two ways of life constantly inviting the obedience of the Christian, and Paul had nothing else to offer but the constant pulling of one against the other. A.Motyer. The table below introduces us to the 'constant pulling of one against the other'.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENEMY Their Destination – 3:18-19

As Paul looks out upon the world he's living in, his eyes fill with tears (3:18). The verses before us reveal the heart of the enemy, and why we need to stay clear of their influence. But before we get there, Paul wants to model to us the right attitude and spirit. He wants to test our hearts, and make sure we love lost sinners, instead of standing in judgement of them.

TEXT	ENEMIES OF THE CROSS	TEXT	LOVERS OF THE CROSS
3:19	Heading for destruction	3:20	Heading for salvation
3:19	Want their appetites satisfied NOW	3:21	Look to a renewed body in the future
3:19	Mind set on this life. Earthbound	3:20	Citizenship is in heaven Heaven bound
3:21	Glory in their shame	3:21	Look forward to the glory of Christ

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Interestingly, Paul does not focus upon specific sins, but instead the way 'enemies of the cross' think'. So often we concentrate upon specific sins, instead of taking a step back and considering the world view that produces them. The enemy has their mind focused upon 'this world' (3:19), which controls their behaviour now, and how they think about the future.

Their Desire – 3:19

Here Paul wants to cement the link between the enemy's worldview and lifestyle choices. This is consistent with what Paul has already said, for to think like Jesus (2:5), is to act like Jesus (2:6–8). The enemy's rejection of Jesus, controls the morality they live by.

1. There is no authority outside of ourselves
2. Our morality and lifestyle are governed by our desires and appetites
3. What man says is glorious, what God says is shameful

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Our role is to help the young people to see and understand what it looks like today.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CROSS

3:20–21

In two short verses, Paul provides three crucial building blocks that make up the Christian world view.

Your New Identity – 3:20

The first building block is our new identity

3:20 = Citizenship is in heaven – Living now in the light of eternity. Your heavenly identity controlling how you live now

Before we came to Christ, we lived for this world, and allowed our lifestyle to be dominated by our desires and appetites (3:19). With a new master, our

whole horizon and identity has changed. As gospel partners living in a foreign land, we are citizens of another country (3:20). "We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven's citizens." E. Stauffer

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Often Christians are accused of being "too heavenly minded for any earthly use". This should never be the case, for our new identity brings a new lifestyle.

Your New Lifestyle – 1:21–26, 3:20

Here Paul models how a citizen of heaven thinks and acts. Clearly, Paul has two passions which work in tension together. As a citizen of heaven, he hungers to leave base camp and be united with his saviour (1:23). Yet all the time he remains on earth, his passion is to live for Christ (1:21–22). As Paul waits for his saviour (3:20), it's clear he's taught himself to think (2:5), and act like Jesus (1:23).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

As youth leaders we must pray that our young people embrace this tension. Longing to see their saviour (3:20), goes hand in hand with a passion to become like their saviour. Instead of living for the here and now, they live as citizens of heaven, bound for the new creation.

Your New Hope – 3:21

The return of Christ dominates our present reality and our future hope, as we eagerly await the appearing of our saviour. The citizen of heaven learns to see all experiences, whether they be joy or sadness, beauty or decay, life or death, in the light of Jesus' future return. The reality of Jesus' resurrection gives every citizen of heaven a rock-solid hope of a new glorious body.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

How can we help our young people read the world with this kind of hope? A hope built upon the historical resurrection of Christ, and his future appearing.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

As an apostle, Paul calls all Christians to follow his example 3:17, 4:9

1. How has Paul been a role model to the church at Philippi? Read 1:7-8, 15-18, 4:2-3

1:7-8	Paul models how to love God's people
1:15-18	Paul models how to deal with opposition from within
4:2-3	Paul models how to help Christians when they disagree

4. What are the marks of the worldview owned by the 'enemies of the cross'? Read 3:17-19

Where do you see this kind of thinking today?

Where do you find yourself being influenced by this worldview?

2. Why are role models so important to our Christian life? Read 2:19-30

5. What are the marks of the worldview owned by followers of Jesus? 3:18-21

What people do you know who reflect this worldview?

3. In the next five years, how might you be a role model to others?

What is it that attracts you to their example?

GOSPEL JOY DESTROYS DISUNITY (4:1–9)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

4:1 My joy and crown = The eternal reward for gospel faithfulness.

4:1 Stand firm in the Lord = Unity in action.

4:2 Same mind in the Lord = Joint thinking that reflects Jesus' portrait (2:5–11).

4:3 Book of life = Assured salvation.

4:4 Rejoice = "The essence of the matter is to so value Jesus Christ, and so long for the smile of his approval, that nothing else matters". *A. Motyer*

4:5 Gentleness = "The attitude of a person who is charitable towards people's faults and merciful towards people's failings because he takes their whole situation into his reckoning". *R. P. Martin*

4:5 The Lord is near = Living as if Jesus will soon knock on your door.

4:6 Anxious = Lack of trust in God.

4:6 Prayer and petition = Direct and specific requests that are based upon God's character and actions.

4:7 Peace of God = The death of Jesus that brings salvation and assures us of victory.

4:7 Which transcends all understanding = Something bigger than what our small minds can imagine.

4:7 Guard your hearts and minds = God's protection over your heart and mind.

4:8 If anything is excellent or praiseworthy = Thinking in a way that brings a smile to your Saviour's face.

4:8 Think about such things = Reflect upon and let these virtues shape your conduct. Thinking that leads to life change.

THE LINK

CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

Right from session one we have seen the dominant theme of partnership, and Paul's two ways of illustrating it.

Partnership

The first theme is gospel partnership 1:5. The apostle's aim is to teach the Philippian church how to stand as one 1:27–29, as they hold out God's word, and shine like stars 2:12–16.

Portraits

The purpose of the portraits is to show us the character of a gospel partner:

1:1, 2:7: They are marked by being obedient servants

1:9–11: To make right choices, they seek God's wisdom

1:27: They live worthy, stand firm, stay united

2:15: They shine like stars in a dark world

2:16: They hold out the word of life

Prayer

Throughout the book, Paul has sought to model dependent prayer. Today's passage is the greatest example of that.

THE TRUTH

THE SEAT BELT TEST

Gospel joy destroys disunity

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners
what do we do?

Youth: Rejoice (4:4)

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners
what guards our hearts?

Youth: God's Peace (4:7)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

The People – 4:1

All the way through the book, Paul has modelled to us how we should relate as gospel partners. One of the clearest ways we see this is through the names and titles he gives them.

TEXT	Paul models committed prayer
1:1	He's a fellow servant
1:12	Brothers and sisters
2:20	Timothy – 'no one else like him'
2:22	Timothy – 'a son'
2:25	Epaphroditus – my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier
2:29	Epaphroditus – honour people like him
3:1, 13, 17	Brothers and sisters
3:20	Our citizenship is in heaven

SESSION TEN

The titles Paul uses reveals the theology he believes. There's not one ounce of superiority or one-upmanship in Paul's thinking and approach. They are his brothers and sisters, and he's their co-worker and fellow soldier. This godly attitude is evident in the verses we are looking at today, for they are his 'joy and crown', the 'friends' he deeply loves (4:1).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Every culture will have examples of power abuse. People are put in positions of power, and often use that power to dominate and manipulate others. We saw in the last session that Paul had a unique role as an apostle. That position brought power, which could have led to abuse. So, what was it that stopped Paul using his power in a manipulative and abusive way?

1. His own sin and brokenness

3:4–6 = Paul's CV was superior to anyone else's
3:9 = When Paul met Jesus, he realised his sin, and chose to hide himself in Jesus' righteousness.

Paul knew himself to be 'one hungry sinner, telling another hungry sinner, where to find bread'.

2. His saviour's example

2:7 = The example of Jesus' servanthood controlled every relationship he entered.



THE PROBLEM – 2:1–5, 4:2–3

Here Paul faces his greatest fear, two gospel partners refusing to think 2:5, and act like Jesus. This is a portrait of two people overtaken by selfish ambition and vain conceit 2:3–5.

What's at stake?

In the previous chapter Paul showed how we face 'dangerous dogs' (3:2), and 'enemies of the cross' (3:18). When God's people argue and fight, they deny the gospel of reconciliation, and the character of a gospel partner. Instead of a crooked generation being impacted by the word of life (2:14–16), the dogs and enemy's advance.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

These verses are full of reality, for they describe the heart of every sinner. Clearly these ladies are gospel hearted, for they 'contended at Paul's side' and have their names written in the 'book of life'. So, what is Paul's advice?

As far as Paul is concerned, the argument between Euodia and Syntyche is everyone's responsibility, for it goes to the very heart of what it means to be a gospel community. As gospel partners we march (1:5), shine, and hold out the word of life together (2:16). Disunity within the people of God is a massive danger to gospel progress, and therefore everyone's responsibility. This responsibility starts with prayer.

THE PRAYER – 4:4–9

In many ways this prayer draws all the main themes together. Each section starts with a challenge from Paul.

GOD'S PRESENCE – 4:4

The prayer starts with two challenges from Paul. The first is to 'rejoice in the Lord'. "The essence of the matter is to so value Jesus Christ, and so long for the smile of his approval, that nothing else matters". Alec Motyer. The challenge is not merely to rejoice, but to rejoice in the Lord. This is the theme of the

whole prayer, as Paul calls us to focus our minds upon the person of Christ.

The second is to make sure your life is marked by 'gentleness'. "The attitude of a person who is charitable towards people's faults and merciful towards people's failings because he takes their whole situation into his reckoning". R.P. Martin.

These two challenges bring together God's character and our responsibility. When we pray, we are to focus upon Christ (2:6-8). The more we focus upon his character, the more we desire to please him. The more we seek to please him, the gentler we become, which makes us more aware of his presence (4:4).

Application – What's In Your Picture?

One of our responsibilities as youth workers is to teach our young people how to pray and rejoice. Our young people will forget much of what we teach them, but they will never forget what we get most excited about. As far as Paul is concerned, prayer is no passive activity. Instead, prayer is actively reminding yourself of God's greatness, so you end up rejoicing.

GOD'S PEACE – 4:6-7

Here Paul gives two more challenges, 'do not be anxious' and 'in every situation, pray'. The temptation for every Christian is to judge reality by present circumstance instead of God's words and works. When we get drawn into that kind of thinking, we become anxious, and lose our trust in God. Instead, we must learn to read our present circumstance in the light of God's words and works.

4:7 – Guard your hearts and minds God's protection over your heart and mind
The peace of God is built upon the foundation of what God has said and done.

1:1 The truth that we are one of God's people – guards our heart and mind.
1:5 The truth that we are not alone, but belong to other gospel partners – guards our heart and mind.
1:6 The truth that God will finish his work in us – guards our heart and mind.
1:11 The truth that we are covered in the righteousness of Christ – guards our heart and mind.

1:21 The truth that I will one day be with Christ – guards our heart and mind.

1:28 The truth that I am saved by God – guards our heart and mind.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

These are the truths that we must teach and train our young people to actively call to mind when they pray. As they do, they will learn to judge reality not by their present circumstances, but instead by God's truth, which guards their hearts, and brings God's peace. The 'enemies of the cross' judge all things by the immediate, their desires and appetites. One of the biggest antidotes to that kind of thinking is to pray as Paul teaches us.

GOD'S PRAISE – 4:8-9

The last thing Paul challenges gospel partners to do is to think in a praiseworthy way. We must train our young people to actively think about the pure, lovely, and excellent things God has given to us, and as we do the peace of God will guard us.

2:6 We are to think about the deity of the Lord Jesus – and this truth will guard us

2:7 We are to think about the humility of the Lord Jesus – and this truth will guard us

2:8 We are to think about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus – and this truth will guard us

2:9 We are to think about how the Father exalts his Son – and this truth will guard us

2:10-11 We must think about the day when all people will acknowledge the Son – and this truth will guard us

Application – What's In Your Picture?

One of the biggest antidotes to disunity is to pray like Paul encourages us here. When we devote ourselves to pray both individually and corporately like Paul encourages here, Euodia and Syntyche will have their sin exposed, and hopefully brought to repentance.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

1. How does Paul view other gospel partners?
Read 1:1, 12, 2:20,25, 3:1,13,17, 4:1
2. What's the problem in the church that Paul is facing? (4:2-3, 2:1-5)
3. What's at stake if it's not dealt with? Read 2:14-16
4. Who is responsible for dealing with the problem.
Read 4:1-3?
5. How do these three words help us understand how to deal with gospel disunity?

4:4 Rejoice – “The essence of the matter is to so value Jesus Christ, and so long for the smile of his approval, that nothing else matters”.
A. Motyer

4:5 Gentleness – “The attitude of a person who is charitable towards people’s faults and merciful towards people’s failings because he takes their whole situation into his reckoning”. R.P. Martin

4:5 The Lord is near – Living as if Jesus will soon knock on your door
6. What practical difference would it make if you applied these these words and their meaning to your life?

JOYFUL GOSPEL CONTENTMENT (4:10–23)

DIFFICULT WORDS & PHRASES

4:10 Rejoice = “The essence of the matter is to so value Jesus Christ, and so long for the smile of his approval, that nothing else matters.” *A. Motyer*

4:11 Learned to be content whatever the circumstances = Judging your present reality by God’s character and not my personal circumstances.

4:18 Received full payment = “Their generosity has more than enough covered his need.”
R. P. Martin

4:19 Meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus = Putting all our needs alongside the portrait of Jesus, and reacting in a way that honours Him.

THE LINK – CONNECTING THE JIGSAW

The secret to living worthy, standing firm and staying united (1:27), is to gaze at the portrait of Jesus. When we look at him our thinking changes (2:5), which leads to behaviour change (2:6–11).

THE TRUTH – THE SEAT BELT TEST

Thinking like Jesus (2:5) – leads to acting like Jesus (2:6–8).

DEFINING IMAGE OR REPEATED PHRASE

A portrait of Christ.

CHANT

Leader: Joyful Gospel Partners

Youth: Serve like Jesus (2:2)

THE MESSAGE – THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE

Introduction

The major issue Paul wants us to focus upon in these verses is contentment. The easy thing is to see contentment as each person’s own battle, instead of a corporate responsibility. Last session Paul encouraged the gospel community to see the disunity between Euodia and Syntyche as all their responsibility (4:3). Now Paul takes the same approach, as he encourages the gospel community to work towards contentment.

GOSPEL CONTENTMENT = LOVING CHRIST

All the way through Philippians we have been exposed to the power of Paul’s example, as he models what it means to live worthy, stand firm and stay united (1:27). When you read the book of Acts, we see first-hand Paul’s love and devotion for every gospel community he plants. Sadly, that love was often not returned by other Christians, as he faced unkind motives (1:17), and selfish actions (4:15).

This painful reality taught Paul that ultimate contentment will never be found in other human beings, or what they can offer. Every gospel partner is fallen and broken, so to look to them for ultimate contentment will eventually lead to disappointment. Add to this the fierce and often aggressive persecution Paul faced from the dangerous dogs (3:2) and enemies of the cross (3:18). These experiences led to incredibly difficult circumstances, yet in them he learned contentment.

SESSION ELEVEN

4:12 = Whether in need or in plenty

4:12 = Any and every situation

4:12 = Well fed or hungry, in plenty or in want

The key verse is 4:13, I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Sadly, this verse is often misquoted and used to justify Christians fulfilling their own personal dreams and desires.

The Brilliance And The Beauty

Knowing the character and personality of the Lord Jesus is Paul's one great desire. In fact, every other passion or desire is worth nothing compared to knowing Christ (3:7-11). It's within this relationship that Paul is learning to find both his ultimate contentment and strength. His desire is not for God to take him out of the tough situations, but instead to give him the strength to walk worthy, stand firm, and stay united while in them.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

We have seen that the world view of the dangerous dogs and enemies of the cross is to find their ultimate meaning and worth in this world alone (3:19). That being the case, contentment will always be sought in things that give you immediate gratification, whether that be relationships, materialism, or success. Our role is to teach our young people to enjoy the good gifts God gives, but to not find their worth and identity within them. This is unbelievably hard, for the world skilfully promises to fulfil all our felt needs.

As we've journeyed through the book of Philippians, Paul has sought to do two things. Firstly, to reveal the majestic character of Jesus, and secondly, how we develop a deep relationship with him. When we look at his character (2:6-8), we think his thoughts (2:5). The more we think his thoughts, the more we live like Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30).

GOSPEL CONTENTMENT = RELYING UPON GOD'S PEOPLE

In these verses we see the rich relationship that Paul has developed with the Philippian church. As the gospel community learns contentment through their relationship with Jesus, so they learn to love one another.

Their love for Paul

4:10 = They renewed their concern for him

4:14 = They share in his troubles

4:15 = They are unique in helping him

4:16 = They continually sent him aid

Paul's thankfulness

4:17-18 = Thankful for the gift Epaphroditus sent, which is a fragrant offering, pleasing to God.

4:19 = Thankful that all his needs are met through Christ.

4:20 = Thankful to God the Father

4:21-22 = Thankful for a gospel community who live worthy, stand firm, staying united.

Here we see two wonderful things working together, learned contentment leading to gospel partnership, which brings great glory to God the father.

Application – What's In Your Picture?

Once again Paul helps us to understand that true knowledge of God always leads to practical implications. The more we grow in our love for Christ, the more we will love each other.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS: A TIME TO APPLY

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:10–23

1. What comes into your mind when you think of the word contentment?
4. Why did Paul not look to other humans for his ultimate contentment? Read 1:17, 4:15 & 3:2,18

Here is a dictionary definition – ‘a state of happiness and satisfaction’

2. How do your friends seek to find this ‘state of happiness and satisfaction’?
5. Which circumstances did Paul learn to be content in? Read 4:12

How is that similar to 3:19?

3. How does that differ from how Paul approached this?
6. What gave him the passion, motivation and strength to do that? Read 3:7-11, 2:6-8

4:11, Learned to be content whatever the circumstances

Judging your present reality by God’s character and not my personal circumstances

7. What does Biblical contentment lead to 2:19-30, 4:10, 14-16



