

Greetings friends,

I ask that as we begin our spiritual journey together we begin to take some time daily (if you are not already) to read the Scripture and pray. I thought it would be beneficial for us to focus on the same passage of Scripture for the week. This week, we will focus on Sunday's texts (See below) If you were not present in worship on Sunday and have not yet watched it, I encourage you to do so. The Scripture used on Sunday was **Philippians 1:3-11**. Philippians is an **epistle, or letter, from Paul to the church in Philippi**- the first church established on European soil. In this epistle Paul states that he is writing from prison (2.19, 23-30; 4:18). Philippians is often regarded as the "**Epistle of Joy**." The book is **four chapters long**- only four pages in my Bible! (I encourage you to read the whole book!) Paul writes to the church to **thank them for their unsolicited giving, generosity, and support**. He also urges the church toward **unity** and encourages them to **live joyfully in every circumstance**.

Format-this is a repeat from every week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all. It is listed at the bottom for review and for anyone who is new to this exercise. Please remember that it is a suggestion. There is no pressure to do it in the format suggested, to do everything on the days that are listed, or to even to answer all the questions. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. If one question takes up the time because you are moved in your spirit, then stay with it. The idea of this is to spend some intentional time with the Scriptures, in the presence of God, and in prayer and reflection- in whatever way that works for you!

Scripture:

Philippians 1:3-17 (NIV)

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Other Scriptures referenced:

Philippians 2:3-5

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 8:2-11 (NKJV)

² Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. ³ Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, ⁴ they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act." ⁵ Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" ⁶ This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.

⁷ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." ⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

John 21:15-17

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD:

Monday: v.3-4 "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy" "I thank"- it is always good practice to begin prayers with thanking God. Thanking God reflects a grateful spirit, an acknowledgement of what God has done. The Greek word is *eucharisteó*, which is where we derive the word "Eucharist"- The Great Thanksgiving, or Holy Communion. On Sunday we celebrated Communion, the Great Thanksgiving, on "World

Communion Day.” Take a moment and reflect upon how the sacrament of the Eucharist is a great thanksgiving. What does that say to you? How does that make you feel? How does that relate to our prayers? “My God”- curious that Paul used “my” instead of “our”- why do you think he made that choice? “Every time I remember you”- It’s important to be mindful, attentive to the Holy Spirit at work within us. God will often bring to mind people, leading us to pray for them. Ask God if there is someone he would like you to pray for. When someone comes to mind, take the time and lift them up in prayer. “I thank my God every time I remember you”- imagine having such a positive impact on someone that the mere thought of you bring someone joy, and they give thanks to God. Wow! It is certainly a call for us to live in ways that people would respond with such gratitude. Ask God if there is something he would like you to say or do that would bless someone else. Then do it. Imagine how the congregation at Philippi felt when they heard this statement! Who could you reach out to, with a call, text, card- something, to let them know how thankful you are for them? Ask God to bring someone to mind. Follow through, and bless someone today!

Tuesday: v.5 “because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now- “your partnership in the gospel”- “partnership” in Greek is *koinónia*, which has several different meanings. It can be translated as contributory help, participation. It was often used to refer to financial sharing (which is mentioned in 4:10-20). It can also mean sharing in, and spiritual fellowship. Imagine it meaning all of those! In the Amplified Bible, which expands the English to give the fullness of the Hebrew and Greek language, the phrase says, “your participation and partnership [both your comforting fellowship and gracious contributions].” This church then, was giving financially, relationally, and spiritually- which is what we are called to do as well! Take a moment and ask God about each of these- how does God want you to be giving financially? Ask God for an amount. Ask God about a weekly tithe, a special offering, a gift toward something- how does God want you to follow through? Than do it. Ask God about the relationships you have in the church. Is there anyone who comes to mind- that would need prayer, or perhaps God would want you to connect with, or share with, or even mentor? Ask God how he would like you to give relationally. Then do it. Ask God about giving spiritually- praying, worshiping- is there something more or different that God would like you to do? If so, ask God for guidance, and then do it. “From the first day until now”- consistency in commitment. It’s something that has unfortunately become not as common for many in churches today. Take some time to pray about your own commitment level, and the consistency of the practice of your faith. What is God telling you? Is God wanting you to grow in commitment? Is God wanting you to grow in consistency of practice? If so, how can you step into that? What can you do to make that happen?

Wednesday: v. 6 “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” “That he [God] who began a good work in you”- based on what you know of God, what “good work” do you believe God began within the believers at Philippi? What is the evidence of that in the congregation? What does that say about what God has begun in you? What evidence is there of that in your life? In our

congregation? Imagine that the good work, that has been expressed so much already, is just the beginning of what God will be doing in your life! How does that make you feel? What are you looking forward to? Why? “Will carry it on to completion”- I memorized it years ago as “will be faithful to complete it.” The word “complete” in the Greek is *epiteleó*, a verb which not only means to complete, but also to accomplish, to perfect. Consider sanctification, a work of God’s grace that is the spiritual process of being made holy, Christian perfection. We become more and more like Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit working within us and with us in cooperation. Does this change your thought of what God may be doing within you? What is the Holy Spirit telling you? “Being confident of this”- this is confidence in God’s work, of God’s promise. How does the church of Philippi being a giving church with commitment and consistency, play into this thought? “Until the day of Christ Jesus”- this could be the second coming of Christ, and this could also be when we experience glorifying grace, when we meet Christ in eternity. Which understanding do you prefer? Why? Is this something you are looking forward to or not? Why, or why not? How does it feel that you too can have confidence that God has begun a good work in you and that God will carry it on to completion until you see Jesus Christ face to face? Applying all of this to your life, ask God for revelation, for an image of what is going on inside of you. Take time with it, envision God’s work, and envision glory. Spend some time soaking in God’s presence and giving thanks.

Thursday: v. 7a “It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart”- “It is right”- “right” in the Greek here is *dikaios*, which not only means “right,” but “just,” especially in the eyes of God, “righteous.” So Paul is saying that what he is thinking and feeling are in alignment with God’s standard, “conformity to God’s own being” (from biblehub.com). Take a moment to pray through your day, the time leading up to now. How much of what you thought and felt could be described as “right” by this definition? Were there moments that were not? If so, take some time in prayer with that. Ask God what was really going on- why did you have that kind of response? Dig deep- what was the underlying thing that prompted something that would not be “right.” Confess, and ask for healing, because when these things happen to us (and it does sometimes for everyone), there is usually some underlying reason that needs understanding and healing. Begin to become aware of the Holy Spirit’s conviction if you ever begin in that direction again. Imagine, that Paul had the believers in Philippi in his heart- that what the believers in this church were doing was so God-filled and moving that it provoked him to feel this way! May we all become someone that invokes that response in others, and may God also bring those people into our lives as well.

Friday: v.7b “and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the Gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.” “Whether”- no matter what- God’s grace is abundant and shared with all who believe- “share God’s grace with me”- we are all brothers and sisters in Christ together. “In chains”- Paul was in prison when he wrote this, unable to go out and share the Gospel, yet God’s grace was still there. Have you ever felt as if you were “in chains” in your life? It could be from circumstances, times when you felt trapped, stuck, caught, unable to move forward, or oppressed in some way spiritually. Ask God to bring to mind any times that you have

experienced being “in chains.” Pay attention as memories come forward- what are you thinking, feeling? Why? Ask God for what is needed- healing, deliverance, opportunity, freedom in whatever way God desires for you. “Or defending and confirming the Gospel”- “defending,” from the Greek word *apologia*, where we get the term “apologetics.” This is to know the Scriptures and know the doctrines of the faith so as to be able to testify, debate, make a verbal defense with a well-reasoned reply. This is something we are all called to do- share our faith! (btw- we will be having Evangelism and Faith Sharing training and discussion on October 29th at 7pm at Rome First- join us!) When was the last time you shared anything about God or your faith or even your church, with someone who was not a believer? How did that go? How did you feel? Did you feel confident? Why, or why not? “Confirming”- can also be translated as “establishment,” and to “produce confidence.” So, defending the Gospel in a way that brings confidence that the Good News is true- that one should become a believer. Are you feeling confident yourself? Why, or why not? If so, thank God and ask for clarity on how best to share, and opportunity to do so. If not, seek counsel with God, who loves you and holds you in the palm of his hand. Spend time with God, and let God’s confidence fill any empty or dark places. V.8 “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus”- longing to be with other believers, and God knows the heart. The love and compassion of God within us works to inspire that we too would long to be with other believers. We acknowledge that God knows our heart, so if there is something going on that is preventing you from this longing, ask God for healing, guidance, strength, and a renewed longing. “With the affection of Christ Jesus”- wow! Reflect upon the affection of Christ Jesus, how powerful and wonderful it is!

Saturday: v.9-10 “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” “That your love may abound more and more”- yes! Take a moment and thank God for the love he continues to pour out abundantly, and ask that you would be open to grow even more in love toward God and others. “Love may abound... in knowledge and depth of insight”- the sermon discussed this quite a bit- about love for God and with others. Do you have other ideas on how this could be lived out? “Able to discern”- discernment is something that is best done by being attuned to the Holy Spirit- listening and opening your spiritual senses to know what’s really going on. In the Amplified Bible it reads “recognize and treasure”- does this other translation change your perception of the meaning of the verse? How does it apply to other people? “What is best”- another translation could be “What is excellent.” Does this change your perception of the verse? How does this relate to God? How does this relate to people? “Pure and blameless”- can also be translated as “sincere and without offense.” Does this change your perception of the meaning? When we grow in love, we become morally pure, sincere, without offense, blameless- the journey of sanctification. Why would love have that kind of impact on us? (see 1 John 4:16 – or the entire passage 4:7-21) Note that growing in love is done by growing closer to God. Pray, and (assuming this is what you desire) let God know that you desire to grow closer and ask God how he would like you to do that. “Filled with the fruit of righteousness”- that our lives would produce the fruit that comes by living in love, faith, and obedience to God. How would you describe that fruit? What would it look like, feel like, live like? (see Galatians 5:22-23 after you have listed some things). “Through

Jesus Christ- to the glory and praise of God"- Everything comes through Christ and is for Christ- the fruit we bear will be a witness to who Christ is. Consider how the fruit of righteousness, along with the glory and praise of God, would look like in community? Have you experienced that in our church? If so, describe it. If not, describe that. If both, which is likely (we are humans and none of us are perfect-yet!) take some time in prayer, asking for discernment about situations, people, yourself. Ask God to bless our community and our church. Ask that we, as believers, would be filled with the fruit of righteousness for the glory and praise of God. And give thanks!

Other items:

Responsive Reading (from Psalm 36):

Leader: Your unfailing love is as vast as the heavens

People: Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds

L: Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains

P: Your justice like the ocean depths

L: You care for people and animals alike

P: How precious is Your unfailing love

All: We rejoice in Your abundant love!

Unison Prayer:

Gracious and Everlasting God,

Your steadfast love is always with us.

You planted seeds of love that grow within

You shower us with Your abundant grace

You tend the soil of our hearts

Lead us by Your Spirit, Lord

That Your love would produce a harvest

That we would love as You love us! Amen!

L.O.V.E.

L- Listen, Learn

O- Observe, Open

V- Value, Virtue

E- Empathy, Embrace

Song Lyrics:

Crown Him with Many Crowns (hymnal #327)

1. Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne,
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns

all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

2. Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
who died, and rose on high,
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

3. Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose power a scepter sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
and all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.

4. Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

Let it Start with Me (No Other Name)

In the Streets of every village
Every city's soaring tower
Empty people live in darkness
Every minute every hour
Hear the cry of desperation
From a billion broken hearts
With a need so great, where do we even start?

Let it start with me
Open up my eyes

Fill my heart with your compassion
Free my mind from all distractions
Use my hands, to set the captive free
Move my feet to follow after you
Lord change the world and let it start with me

You've given us the orders
There's a place for everyone
I don't wanna miss my mission
In the plan that you've begun
You have promised to go with me
To the edges of it all
And change everything that keeps me from your call

Let it start with me
Open up my eyes
Fill my heart with your compassion
Free my mind from all distractions
Use my hands, to set the captive free
Move my feet to follow after you
Lord change the world and let it start with me

Take my life, all I've called my own
Everything I am is Yours alone
Let it start with me
Open up my eyes
Fill my heart with your compassion
Free my mind from all distractions
Use my hands, to set the captive free
Move my feet to follow after you
Lord change the world and let it start with me
Open up my eyes
Fill my heart with your compassion
Free my mind from all distractions
Use my hands, to set the captive free
Move my feet to follow after you
Lord change the world and let it start with me

Joyful, Joyful (hymnal #89)

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before thee,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the dark of doubt away.

Giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day!

2. All thy works with joy surround thee,
earth and heaven reflect thy rays,
stars and angels sing around thee,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
call us to rejoice in thee.

3. Thou art giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our brother,
all who live in love are thine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

4. Mortals, join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
love divine is reigning o'er us,
binding all within its span.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward,
in the triumph song of life.

Format (this is a repeat from last week, and will be consistently present for anyone new and as a reminder for all):

Find a quiet place and time to focus on the Word, and to hear from God through it. It doesn't have to be long, for some it will be longer than others. I encourage you, if possible, to do this practice in the morning. You will then find that God brings it to your mind throughout your day.

For greater impact I encourage you to get some paper and a pen and journal daily what thoughts and impressions God brings to mind. Write out also your own thoughts and your own prayers, making sure to leave space within your time for God's response. Listen intently, and notice what rises up within you- what you are thinking, feeling, memories that arise and ideas that spring up. It may be something God would want you to address within yourself and/or with others. It may be something God is inspiring you to begin or end. God's possibilities are infinite! After time, it is often beneficial to go back and read what you have written, and notice how God has been moving in your life (and praise God for it!).

Begin with prayer, quieting yourself within and opening up to hearing what God would like to reveal to you. Praise God for who he is, for loving you, being with you, and more. Then ask God to speak to you; to open your heart and mind to hear his message. (if you are journaling, you could write out the prayer)

Read the Scripture passage over twice; once as a read through, and the second time slowly, meditatively. Notice what God illuminates for you. Notice what words or ideas are “jumping off the page at you,” impacting you from the Scripture. Ask God why that is being highlighted for you. What is God saying to you? What is God asking you to say, do, change, pray about, etc.? What is the application for my life today? **Most importantly- what am I going to do about it? (If you are journaling you could write it all out, which reinforces it in a greater way)

I have put together some daily questions based upon the Scripture. You may use those, but also feel free to deviate away from it if God is leading you there. They are simply offered to prompt contemplation with God. There is much more in this passage, feel free to delve in more!

At the end of your time pray again. I recommend praying throughout, but the ending prayer would include praise, thanking God for revelation, and asking for the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal, bringing to mind God’s will. Ask God for the courage, empowerment, and opportunity to do what you have determined God is asking you to do.