

DO ALL THINGS

AN EIGHT WEEK STUDY FOR ATHLETES ON
FINDING JOY AND CONTENTMENT IN **PHILIPPIANS**

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A READING OF THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS 1-4

There are 27 books in the New Testament. Twenty of them are letters written to the early church or early church leaders. When these churches received these letters, they would read them out loud, straight through. There were no chapters or verses. They were just letters read to the community.

When was the last time you read a whole book of the Bible in one sitting? When was the last time you did that with a group of friends? Chances are you have never done it (or it's been a while). Let's take 10 minutes and read the letter to the Philippians together. Read it like they would have in the 1st century in Philippi, when they first received it. (You could also listen to it through the Bible in the Ao1Life App or at Biblegateway.com)

Read Philippians straight through without stopping to discuss.

What are a few themes that stick out as you read/listened to the whole letter?

Are there any verses that hit you as you read it? Write the verse below and share it with the group.

Share with the group anything you learned about God through reading/listening to Philippians or any questions that came up.

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Throughout the letter we are challenged to understand that true joy and contentment come from knowing Jesus Christ alone. According to Philippians 4:4 where does joy come from?

Have you ever had a coach try to change your stroke/swing/stance/shot/technique? Share with the group how open you were to this change at first and what the end result was.

The name of this study is "Do all Things" taken from Philippians 4:13. Look up this verse and write it below.

In what ways have you or other athletes applied this verse?

Throughout this study we will get a broader context of what Paul means by "do all things through Christ who strengthens me" and study these passages specifically in the final week's study. How do you feel about allowing God to change or expand your understanding of this verse?

This week, memorize Philippians 4:4 and 4:13

Try not to do this alone. How can you help each other memorize and be reminded of this verse?

*A great video to watch together after you have completed this study is by the [Bible Project - Overview of Philippians](https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/philippians) - <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/philippians>



TEAM/WORK

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Philippi, challenging us to understand that true joy and contentment come from Jesus Christ alone.
- One of the key and most well known verses is 4:13, but it is often interpreted without its full context. In the coming weeks we will gain a more robust understanding of what Paul means in this verse.

What are some definitions of “team” and “team work” that you have learned as an athlete?

Read Philippians 1:1-11 together

Throughout Philippians the terms “gospel” (or “Good News” in some versions) and “preach Christ” are prevalent. How would you describe the “gospel/good news”? What does it mean to “preach Christ”?

**a great resource for this question is a booklet called Knowing God Personally. You can find it on this [website](#) or download the "God Tools" app from your app store and you will have it on your phone. Go to either of those resources if you need help answering this question.*

What is the first thing that gives Paul joy?

What is the “good work” (v 6) that God has begun in the Philippians and what is Paul confident of concerning it?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Paul expresses his deep love for the church at Philippi and shares with them how he prays for them. Use the YouVersion Bible App, or similar, to read a couple different versions of Paul's prayer in vs 9-11, then write in your own words a similar prayer for your fellow believers.

(suggested versions: New International Version – NIV, New Living Translation - NLT , Good News Bible - GNB)

Are there things that you have failed to complete in your life that have led to disappointment? If so, share with the group.

How could knowing the good work of your salvation God has started in you will eventually be completed bring you reassurance (give you joy)?

Pick one person in your group (or another believer you know if studying alone) to commit to praying the prayer you wrote above for this week.

Also, pray that this group ("team") you are meeting with will bring each other joy in the weeks ahead.

WHATEVER HAPPENS



PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- We learned the Gospel is good news that allows us to know Christ personally.
- God promises to complete the good work He has begun in us.
- We looked at Paul's prayer for the Philippians and wrote one to pray for our fellow believers.

Describe a time you have been in a frightening situation but were less afraid because someone was with you.

Read Philippians 1:12-30

Paul is writing this letter from prison for preaching the Gospel. Besides imprisonment what other things have happened to Paul? Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 for a broader view of what Paul has been through.

What is Paul's attitude in this passage about his circumstances and toward whether he lives or dies?

In verse 27, Paul tells the believers in Philippi "Whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." How do we see Paul exhibit this throughout chapter 1?

List three things Paul mentions that he can trust will be true as a result of the people conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

The Greek word translated "striving together" is "sunathleo". It's where we get our English word "athletics". Literally the word means "striving together as athletes". How does this idea of striving together help your understanding of how we are to "stand firm" and not be frightened?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

What does it mean to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel (v27) as an athlete?

What are some "whatever happens" situations where you have fallen short in the past of conducting yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ? What are some ways you may better handle similar situations in the future?

"Whatever happens" includes both things we expect/know will happen as well as those things that happen suddenly or by surprise.

Agree or Disagree: It is often easier to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel to those things we know will happen (our actions) than to those things that take us by surprise (our reactions). Explain your answer and share an example.

How can we be better prepared to handle those things that happen suddenly or by surprise in a "manner worthy of the Gospel"?

When we fail to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, what do we need to remind ourselves of? (read 1 John 1:9 and reread Philippians 1:6)

How could knowing you are fully forgiven and that God is continuing to work in you bring you joy?

How does having a community of believers help you stand firm in your christian faith? Why do you think this is and how does it relate to what Paul shares about standing firm together without fear?

Who are the people in your life who are standing firm with you? If you don't have anyone, what steps can you take to find someone?

What is an area of your life or faith where you need your fellow believers to unite around you and help you stand firm? What are some ways they can practically do this?



WORK OUT

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Paul has faced incredible hardships for his faith but continues to be content and rejoice, even sharing the gospel in jail.
- We are called to conduct our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel in all situations (good/bad/expected/unexpected/etc)
- We can stand firm in our faith as we unite with other believers

Sports are often credited with teaching teamwork. However, sometimes athletics cause us to feel self-important and look out for our own interests first. Discuss with the group how you have seen both of these to be true.

Read Philippians 2:1-18 together

What are the keys to unity that Paul calls the believers in Philippi (and us) to in verses 2-4?

List the characteristics of Jesus in verses 6-11 (*This was likely a hymn sung by the church that Paul used to remind those in Philippi of some of Jesus' characteristics).

In verse 12, Paul admonishes the Philippians to “work out your salvation.” What do you think this means? Is this verse saying salvation is by works? (Hint: look at Philippians 1:1).

According to verse 13 where does the will and strength to act come from?

In verses 14-16, list the examples Paul gives of ways we live as God's people that show the world our salvation.

What does he say we will experience as we apply these to our lives?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Which of the keys to unity that you listed above come most natural to you? Which of these do you need God's Spirit to work most in you? What can you do this week to remind yourself to let the Spirit work on this area in you?

How does athletic culture reinforce attitudes of self-importance and self-interest? Why do you think this is part of the athletic culture? How can you guard against these while still pursuing athletic excellence?

Serving (valuing others above ourselves) is one way we can show humility and Christ-likeness. What are one or two specific ways you can serve your teammates and/or coach this week?

Additionally, think of those who serve you and your team behind the scenes (i.e., athletic trainer, managers, academic support, athletic director/sport oversight, compliance, marketing, sports info, equipment manager, director of operations) and consider how a heartfelt "thank you" may be a "shining light" to them. What are some practical ways you can thank those behind-the-scenes people?

Take some time to do that now.

What might it look like for you to "work out" your salvation this week? Share with the group one action step you plan on taking in this area.

Pray for each other to experience joy as you each look to serve others and "work out" your salvation this week.



TAKE THE "L"

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Paul shares the importance of unity among the followers of Jesus and serving each other.
- We learned characteristics of Jesus that we are called to imitate.
- We are called to “work out” the salvation we already have.
- It is only through God’s work in us that we can live the life He calls us to in this world.
- Serving others and living out our faith brings us joy.

Share with the group one of your proudest accomplishments.

Read Philippians 3:1-11 together.

In verse 1, Paul reminds us to find our joy “in the Lord.” He then goes on to share how he previously sought to find joy and meaning in his religious accomplishments.

Is Paul bragging about his achievements in verses 4-6? What parts of verse 3 and verses 7-9 show that?

Referring to his salvation, Paul already “knows” Christ. What does he mean in verse 10 when he says “I want to know Christ?”

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

What area(s) of your life do you tend to define yourself in ways other than who you are in Jesus Christ?

While these may bring temporary happiness, why do they fail to bring us lasting joy?

Initially it is Paul's religious accomplishments that he now "puts no confidence in" and "counts as loss", as they did nothing to bring him closer to knowing Jesus. In verse 8, he includes everything else as worthless "compared" with knowing Jesus. What might it mean to count the things you shared above as loss or worthless compared to knowing Jesus more deeply? What could this practically look like?

Discuss how you can pursue accomplishments but not find your identity in those accomplishments? What does this look like?

Paul has a deep desire to grow in his relationship with Jesus and Christian maturity. How deep is your desire to know Jesus more and grow in your maturity? Think about that honestly this week and if you are willing, ask God to deepen your desire for Him. (We will come back to this next week).



PRESS ON

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Paul continues to remind us to find joy in our relationship with Jesus.
- Earthly accolades will not give us lasting joy.
- Paul challenges us to not put our faith in religious accomplishments or seek to find our joy in earthly achievements, but to make knowing Jesus more deeply our priority.

Can you think of an example in your athletic career when you pursued and tried to accomplish a clearly defined goal? Share with the group what the goal was—and what you did and didn't do in order to accomplish it.

Read Philippians 3:12-21 together.

Thinking back to last week's study and looking again at verse 10, what goal has Paul not yet obtained (verse 12)?

What does Paul say in verses 12 and 14 that show his commitment to mature in his faith?

What are the two parts of "pressing on" that Paul states in verse 13?

What does it mean to "forget what is behind"? What doesn't it mean?

What athletic images come to mind when you think of "straining toward what is ahead"?

In verse 20, Paul reminds us that our citizenship is in heaven. What does this mean?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

In order to “strain towards what is ahead” you need to have a goal or vision for the future. How are you straining towards what is ahead in your sport?

What would it look like to do this in your spiritual life? What is that goal you are straining towards?

We all have things in our past we need to “forget”? Is this easy or difficult for you? How can holding onto the past hinder your growth in sport and in your faith? Is there anything you need to forget? How do 1 John 1: 8,9 and Psalm 103:12 help?

In what ways are you setting your mind on earthly things? In what ways are you thinking about your citizenship in heaven?

Last week you were asked to honestly consider and pray about your desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus. If you have a desire to grow, to “strain toward” maturity in your faith, ask yourself these 3 questions:

What things do I need to keep doing in order to grow in my Christian maturity?

What things do I need to start doing in order to grow in my Christian maturity?

What things do I need to stop doing in order to grow in my Christian maturity?

Share with the group your answers.

What does this group need to keep, start, or stop doing in order to help each other grow in Christian maturity?



STAND FIRM AND REJOICE

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- Paul encourages us to press on in our relationship with Jesus and grow in Christian maturity.
- We do this by forgetting what is behind: Confessing sin, learning from these past mistakes, and leaving them in the past.
- We also grow by straining toward what is ahead: Continuing to grow in our fellowship with Jesus and living as he calls us to in this world.
- We need to do this individually and as a group. We came up with some practical things we can do to grow in our Christian maturity.

Read Philippians 4:1-9 together.

What does it mean to “stand firm”? How does it differ from “straining toward” that Paul talks about in Chapter 3? Why are both important?

Read the first verse again. How does Paul describe his brothers and sisters in Philippi? Why do you think he feels this way about them?

In verse 4, Paul continues to call us to rejoice. Why do you think he “said it again”?

List the things that Paul exhorts us towards in verses 4-9.

Paul gives us two promises in verses 7 and 9. How do the promises differ? How does John 16:33 relate to these promises?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

Take a few minutes to list 10 things you are grateful for, big (like your family) and small (like your bed). Share 2 or 3 with the group.

How does focusing on things you are grateful for help you rejoice in spite of difficult times/circumstances?

Verse 6 says “do not be anxious about anything.” Take some time to share as a group some things you are anxious about and write down what each person shares. No matter how big or small these anxieties or situations are, God wants us to bring these requests to him.

Now take some time to pray together about the list you have created. One person can pray, you can pray for the person to your right or left, or take a few minutes in silent prayer.

Paul’s final exhortation of the letter to the Philippians is in verses 8,9. He gives us some categories of things that we are to think about. Read through these again.

Are there things you spend time thinking about that don’t fit in the categories? What is the first one that comes to mind?

What one or two changes can you begin to make this week to eliminate something that is unhealthy to think about? Take time now to brainstorm with your group a scripture or biblical principle to replace the thought with when it comes up.

Note: As you think of these things, don’t forget that this “standing firm” and “straining toward what is ahead” is part of growing in your relationship with Jesus. Be careful not to allow it to become legalism for you as discussed in week 5.

Extra Resources for the Week

Article: [8 Habits of a Grateful Athlete](https://www.thechristianathlete.com/blog/habits-grateful-athlete)

<https://www.thechristianathlete.com/blog/habits-grateful-athlete>

Video: [Ao1 Life Digital Chapel • Week 17 • 8 Habits of a Grateful Athletes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L1L1L1L1L1)

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6211813/video/372274462>





DO ALL THINGS

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- We are exhorted to stand firm in our faith, to rejoice, and to pray in all situations, especially when we are anxious.
- God promised the peace of Christ when we live out this exhortation.

Read Philippians 4:10-23 together.

In 2:25 we saw that Epaphroditus brought Paul a gift from the church of Philippi. Summarize Paul's thoughts about their gift.

Paul uses the word content a couple times in verses 11 and 12. As a group, come up with a definition for content.

Why do you think this is an important word for Paul in the context of this letter and how does it relate to joy?

Often Christian athletes view Philippians 4:13 as a promise that they can achieve all their athletic goals. Have you viewed it this way? As you read this verse in its proper context, does it mean something different to you?

Divide the group and two and have half read each of the articles below, then share what each group learned with the others.

Article: [What Does Philippians 4:13 Have To Do With Sports](https://www.thechristianathlete.com/blog/philippians-413-sports)
<https://www.thechristianathlete.com/blog/philippians-413-sports>

Article: [Why Philippians 4:13 Doesn't Mean What You Think](https://sites-stage.athletesinaction.org/articles/why-philippians-413-doesnt-mean-what-you-think/)
<https://sites-stage.athletesinaction.org/articles/why-philippians-413-doesnt-mean-what-you-think/>

How do you feel about this broader understanding of what 4:13 does (and doesn't) mean? Though Paul has learned to be content living in need and hunger, he still accepts the Philippians gift. What do you think is the difference between being content in a difficult circumstance and settling for it?

APPLICATION FOR THE ATHLETE

While 4:13 isn't a promise that we will achieve all our athletic goals, it still relates to our sport. What are some current things in your life as an athlete that you struggle to be content with? How can memorizing Philippians 4:13 help?

Share with the group other areas you need to experience more contentment in and be joyful in spite of? Now pray for one another in these areas.

Commit to praying this week for one other person in the group, as well as yourself, for a deeper understanding of 4:13. Who will that person be and how will you remind yourself to pray for them?

Paul was the recipient of a gift from the Philippian Church. He received it not because he deserved it but because the Philippian Church wanted to graciously give. Is there someone you know whom you can show God's grace and kindness by giving a gift to them? Could you do this as a group? Who could that be and what could it look like? Be creative and have fun with it.



OPTIONAL WEEK 9 - REVIEW OF PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS 1-4

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

- We have read and studied the whole Letter to the Philippians
- We looked at what Philippians 4:13 really means in its context: contentment in all situations.
- Paul is a great example of what contentment can look like when things don't go the way you want.

Reread all of Philippians out loud like you did in week 1.

Discuss with the group what you have learned from this study, how you have done applying that which you have learned and how you can continue to apply it.

Is there anything God is impressing on you or the group to “live out the gospel” or “workout your salvation” now that the study is over?

How are you doing in being content in your current circumstances? Is there anything this group can do to help you?

How easy or difficult is it for you to find joy in your relationship with Jesus?

Spend time praying for each other.