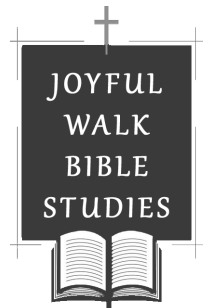


Knowing Jesus... Knowing Joy!

Are you hungry for joy in your life?

A study of Philippians

MELANIE NEWTON



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Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 10 lessons covering Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Each lesson begins by asking you to read the whole Bible passage for the lesson to get the “big picture.” If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage being covered.

THE BASIC STUDY

Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (*Observation: what’s actually there*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning*)
- How does this apply to me today? (*Application: making it personal*) **Your Joy Journey** questions are the application questions in this study. These questions lead to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life.

STUDY ENHANCEMENTS

Deeper Discoveries (optional): Embedded within the sections are *optional* questions for research of subjects we don’t have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that significantly enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your “discoveries.”

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, six additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

Other useful study tools: Use online tools or apps (blueletterbible.org or “Blue Letter Bible app” is especially helpful) to find *cross references* (verses with similar content to what you are studying) and meanings of the *original Greek words or phrases* used (usually called “interlinear”). You can also look at any verse in *various Bible translations* to help with understanding what it is saying. Feel free to add your own study at the end of each lesson.

PODCASTS

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at melanienewton.com/podcasts and most other podcast channels. Follow along with the “Podcast Listener Guides” for each lesson.

NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY

The New Testament opens with the births of John and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God's incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus' return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You'll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other's insights.** Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. 😊
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!

Recommended: Listen to “[A Joyful Beginning](https://melanienewton.com/podcasts)” at melanienewton.com/podcasts as an introduction to the whole study. Use the listener guide below.

A Joyful Beginning

ABOUT PAUL

- When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians that we’ll be studying together, he had been a Christian for almost 30 years. From the beginning, Jesus told him that Paul was to go to those who were called Gentiles (that is, anyone who was not Jewish) and preach the gospel to them. Paul spent the first three of those years just getting to know Jesus and learning what to teach about Him to others.
- Then, Jesus sent him on mission to Cypress and southern Turkey where many people believed the gospel and new churches were formed. Then, God directed him through a vision to northern Greece so he could preach the gospel there. When Paul arrived in Philippi, he was about 45 years old. He had been a believer for around 15 years and in ministry for 12 of those.

ABOUT PHILIPPI

- Philippi was a commercial center of possibly 15,000 residents in the province of Macedonia in northern Greece along the Roman interstate highway called the Egnatian Way.
- Philippi was a Roman colony. Those born there were automatically Roman citizens.
- The Philippians, who were mostly Greek and Roman, were so proud of this privilege that they modeled their city after Rome, dressed like Romans, and spoke Latin as often as Greek. There were very few Jews living there.
- As a Roman citizen himself, Paul understood everything these people felt and thought about their citizenship.

THE JOYFUL RELATIONSHIP BEGINS

- Philippi had so few Jews that there was no synagogue. So, any Jews living there met for prayer on the Sabbath outside the city walls along the banks of the river to get away from idolatry.
- As Paul shared the gospel with a group of women meeting for prayer, the Lord opened Lydia’s heart so that she accepted the gospel readily and brought it to her home. She knew Jesus so could know joy. The new church met in her home.

- God healed a demon-possessed girl through Paul, causing an uproar which led to Paul and Silas being severely beaten and chained in jail. At midnight, while they were singing praises to God in the hearing of other prisoners, God answered with an earthquake.
- Overwhelmed with their Christian testimony and their unquenchable joy, the jailer asked the most important question any sinner can ask God, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." The jailer and his family believed and were saved.

THE JOYFUL RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

- When Paul left Philippi, a church was established in Lydia's house, a church of servants and givers who had what Paul described in 2 Corinthians as "overflowing joy." Paul visited these believers again 3 years later. The church sent Paul a financial gift several times.
- Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, then after a long time of waiting was sent to Rome to be imprisoned there. Paul was in his own rented house for two years. While he was in prison, the Philippian believers once again had collected a gift of money and sent it to him along with their pastor, Epaphroditus, so Paul's confinement would be more comfortable.
- This church was closer to Paul than was any other church. His love for them and their love for him are evident throughout the letter.
- Paul rejoiced as he wrote this letter to thank the church and to express his love for them. They lived out the joy of knowing Jesus.
- It is possible that Paul visited the Philippian church again a few years after the writing of this letter. His life ended in 67/68 AD, but his legacy continued in Philippi into the 2nd century we know for sure.

THE JOYFUL LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a well-crafted expression of gratitude and joy. This joy comes through your relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the one who promises to complete His work in you. The one who supplies your every need. The one who gave Himself up for you on the cross. The one who gives you the motivation and the power to serve Him with joy. The one who strengthens you in every circumstance. The one who causes you to be content. The one who supplies your every need from His glorious riches. The one whom you can know well. The one who longs to produce joy in your life. The deeper your relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits you and the less your joy is dependent on external circumstances. This study of Philippians will encourage you to **know Jesus** and **know joy!**

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

1: A Joy-Filled Letter

Philippians 1:1-2

DAY ONE STUDY

The ABCs of Philippians—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

AUTHOR

Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church in Philippi. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent making industry. Paul was trained in that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). As a Jewish Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-respected rabbi of the day. Paul was an ardent persecutor of the early church until his life-changing conversion to Christianity

After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was sent by God as an apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This was an amazing about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles. Paul wrote 13 letters that are included in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2nd Timothy in 67 A.D. (*You can glean more about Paul's background from Acts 8:3; 9:1-31; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; and Galatians 1:11-24.*)

BACKGROUND

Philippi was a city in eastern Macedonia, or modern northern Greece, 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Much traffic to Rome from the east went through Philippi, which served as a gateway city to Greece and Italy (a major crossroad on the Egnatian Way—one of the empire's highways linking the Aegean and Adriatic Seas). Philippi was a transplanted Roman colony. The citizens in the colony were given the same rights and privileges as those who lived in Italy. They were able to maintain their own senate and magistrates and were not subject to regional government. Most importantly, this excluded them from taxation. Luke refers to Philippi as a "leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony" (Acts 16:12). This is an interesting comment since Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. The reason for this is that Philippi was a Roman colony and Thessalonica was not, which gave it more status. There was also a school of medicine in Philippi and some think that Luke may have attended there. But we don't know for sure.

The church at Philippi was founded around 51 A.D. during Paul's second missionary journey. During this visit to Philippi, Paul and Silas shared the gospel with a group of women outside the city gates by the riverbank gathered for prayer. The good news of Christ was embraced by Lydia and her household, which possibly included her servants and children. Lydia became the first believer in Philippi and was a gracious hostess to the first church in Europe, which met in her home. Others believed the gospel message including a jailer and his family. When Paul and Silas left, a small church was already meeting in Lydia's home. At the end of Paul's third missionary trip, Paul visited Philippi again.

Paul had a very close relationship with the Philippian church. They were a source of encouragement to him and they also provided financially for his ministry more than once. Paul calls this church his

“joy and crown.” Sixty years later, a church leader named Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians. We learn from it that after 2 generations, the Philippian church was still standing firm and that it cherished the memory of its great founder.

CONTEXT

The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul around 61 or 62 A.D. during his house arrest in Rome (Acts 28). Being under “house arrest,” Paul was chained to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day, but was free to receive visitors and write (Acts 28:17-31). The guard was changed every 6 hours, which gave Paul an excellent opportunity to share his faith with many different guards. Philippians was apparently the last of the four letters Paul wrote from the Roman prison (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians), as Philippians 1:21-28 seems to indicate a decision about his fate would be made soon.

1. What grabbed your attention from the ABCs above?

2. Read Acts 16:9-40. What do you learn about the founding of this church in Philippi?

Scriptural Insight: The story of Lydia is a great example of God’s providence and His care for believers. Lydia was a worshiper of God but, like Cornelius in Acts 10, had not yet heard the gospel. As Paul shared the good news of Jesus, God opened her heart so that she received the life-giving message. After Lydia’s conversion and baptism, she insisted that Paul and his friends come to stay at her home. Luke says that “she prevailed upon us,” which indicates the fervency of her desire to be hospitable. The missionaries did indeed judge Lydia to be a true believer, and they stayed at her home while in Philippi. We also see the immediate bond that a new believer has with other believers in Christ—Lydia showed hospitality to those who brought the good news, and she wouldn’t take “no” for an answer. Evidence of joy!

Lydia, although a native of Thyatira in Asia Minor, is the first person recorded to have been saved in Europe. Later in biblical history, we discover there is a church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18). We have no record of Paul visiting that city on any of his missionary journeys.

IS IT HAPPINESS OR JOY?

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a well-crafted expression of gratitude and joy. So, what exactly is joy? How does joy differ from happiness? Happiness is a fleeting emotion based on **external circumstances**. But true joy is different. It is something that comes from within you. Joy is a deep abiding peace and sense of contentment and strength that is due to something **internal**.

True joy is based on a saving relationship with God and enjoying fellowship with Him. The believer's joy is found in the inner work of the Holy Spirit. Even non-believers in Jesus can know happiness as they find it in the good things that God has given to all human beings so generously. The Christian knows a heightened joy that is rooted in the bond that exists between the believer and the Lord and the bond that exists with other believers whom we have come to love. The deeper our relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits us and the less that joy is dependent on external circumstances.

Scriptural Insight: In the Old Testament, joy is cast in terms of the worshiping community's response to God. A relationship with God was the key. In the New Testament, the most common use of joy (Greek, *chairo*) indicates both a state of joy and that which brings us joy. Our relationship with Jesus, particularly abiding in Him and being obedient to Him, is a source of joy (John 15:10-11). Joy is produced in us by the Holy Spirit and is a fruit of His presence (Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). It is not linked with material possessions, but rather is an overflow of salvation (Acts 8:8; 16:34). Joy is not dependent on external circumstances and is applied to suffering as well as to salvation (Acts 13:50-52; 2 Corinthians 7:4; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7)." (Adapted from *The Teacher's Commentary*, p. 934)

While Paul is writing these words of joy in his letter to the Philippians, he is in prison in Rome and chained to a Roman guard! What does Paul know about joy that transcends his circumstances? Are you hungry for joy in your life? Find out how this special letter encourages all who read it to **know Jesus and know joy!**

"Joy is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of Christ." (William Vander Haven)

3. **Your joy journey:** Where in your life are you hungry for joy?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Today, you will get an overview of the letter to the Philippians.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Get the Big Picture

4. Read Paul's letter to the Philippians (only 4 chapters long). A copy of the letter is included in this study guide before Lesson One. This is the best way to see the entire message and get the "big picture" before we divide it into smaller pieces to enjoy it more slowly.

If you read the letter included in this study guide, you saw the highlighted words and phrases. They represent common themes in the letter.

- "Christ" or "Christ Jesus"—How often does Paul mention Jesus Christ?
- "Joy," "rejoice(d)(s)", and "glad"— How many times does Paul express joy in his letter?
- "Gospel"— How often does the word "gospel" occur?
- References to unity (i.e.: one mind, same, united, harmony, etc.)—How often is unity emphasized?

Think About It: Jesus Christ is central to everything about life. He is the focus of the gospel, the reason you can have joy, and the way to have unity of heart in a group of diverse individuals.

5. What do you learn about the Philippian church from your first reading of the letter?

Focus on the Meaning: Paul mentions joy or rejoicing at least 15 times in this letter so it is an excellent mini-study of joy. That means that on average joy or rejoicing appears every 7 verses.

6. What else grabbed your attention?

7. What do you learn about Paul just from reading this letter?

8. **Your joy journey:** What do you hope to learn from your study of Philippians?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 1:1-2. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say? (This is the "Observation" step in the process of Bible Study.)

9. How do Paul and Timothy describe themselves in verse one?

Think About It: "Don't you find it amazing that a great leader like the apostle Paul and his right-hand man, Timothy, chose to evaluate and describe themselves as "servants" of Jesus Christ? The Greek word Paul uses for "servant" was *doulos*, which refers to a slave who had no will, no rights, and no possessions of his or her own. Instead, he was the possession of another...forever! A slave's role in life was singular: to obey his or her master's will quickly, quietly, and without question." (Elizabeth George, *Experiencing God's Peace*, p.20)

10. To whom was the letter of Philippians addressed? Notice the words used in verse 1.

From the Greek: The word “saint” here literally means “holy ones” or “set apart ones,” and refers to anyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ. (Acts 9:13,32; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1)

11. In Philippians 1:2, Paul writes of two spiritual blessings he desires to impart to the readers by writing this letter. What are these?

What does it mean? (*This is the “Interpretation” step in the process of Bible Study.*)

12. Read the following verses to compare Paul’s salutations in other letters. Galatians 1:1-3 (Paul’s first letter); 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; Romans 1:1, 7-8; and Ephesians 1:1-2 (one of Paul’s last letters). What is consistently the same?

Focus on the Meaning: “Grace” was a common Greek salutation that meant “greetings” or “rejoice.” The Jews said “shalom” to each other, meaning “peace and prosperity.” Paul used both words when he greeted the recipients of his epistles. For the Christian, these terms took on a deeper meaning. God has chosen to set His love upon the believer in Christ (grace) resulting in something that the world cannot give (peace).

13. Being confident in the authenticity of what you read in the Bible is important to your faith. How would the consistency you just found help to prove the authenticity of those letters?

What application will you make? (This is the “Application” step in the process of Bible Study.)

14. Your Joy Journey:

- When you introduce yourself to others, how do you describe yourself? Or, put another way, what are the top 3 or 4 words you usually use to tell people who you are?

- Do you think the words you choose to describe yourself reflect what is most important to you? Explain your answer.

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to [“A Joyful Walk”](https://melanienewton.com/podcasts) at melanienewton.com/podcasts after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

A Joyful Walk

Throughout the Bible, our lives are referred to as a “walk” although some days you may feel like yours is a sprint. Am I right? Though you may feel like you are sprinting, your whole life experience is considered a walk.

And, those who place their faith in Christ are living a “faith walk.” But, here’s the catch: a lifetime faith walk must be walked daily. Choices are made daily, weekly, and yearly to follow pathways that lead you to a joyful walk (the kind you pictured in your mind) or to one that is frustrating and disappointing. Along life’s journey, you have to know how to choose the walk that will be joyful.

WHAT IS JOY?

- Most people define joy as a feeling of happiness when you’re smiling and laughing a lot. And, they think that happiness comes from “good happenings.” But, what happens if things are not so good?
- Biblical joy refers to having a **deep inner gladness, regardless of the circumstances** going on around you.
- Biblical joy is supernatural. It is inseparable from the character of God and comes only from a relationship with Him.
- Biblical joy is a fruit of the Spirit of Jesus living in us. That means joy is available to every Christian.
- Biblical joy is a deep abiding peace and sense of contentment and strength.

JOY IS IN GOD’S CHARACTER.

- Joy is part of the character of God.

“The joy of the Lord is my strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

- God has joy whenever anyone comes to Him to have his or her sins forgiven by faith in His Son Jesus. The Bible describes lots of rejoicing in heaven at that time.
- God has pleasure in His creation. The Father God has joy in what His hands have made, especially His creatures.
- God expresses His joy.

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

GOD GIVES US HIS JOY.

- A sense of joy pervades the Bible. In the Old Testament, joy is seen in worshiping and praising God—the enthusiastic response of the worshiping community.
- God’s joy comes to us from a relationship with Him through knowing Jesus Christ. Jesus, who was God, had God’s joy **in** Him. He gives it to us. *John 15:11; 1 Peter 1:8*
- The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. And, He gives you God’s glorious, uncontainable joy. Joy is a **fruit of His presence**. When we know Jesus, we will know joy.
- Joy is most often linked in the New Testament with God’s work in fellow believers whom we love and whom we serve. Joy in knowing Jesus is contagious. It wells up within us and motivates us to serve others in love.
- The deeper our relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits us and the less that joy is dependent on external circumstances.
- We can “rejoice **in** the Lord” when our focus is on our living Lord, the one who promises to complete His work in us. The one who supplies our every need. The one who gave Himself up for us on the cross. The one who gives us the motivation and the power to serve Him with joy. The one who strengthens us in every circumstance. The one who causes us to be content. The one who supplies our every need from His glorious riches. The one whom we can know in a personal relationship. The one who longs to produce joy in our lives.

Jesus paid for your sins on the cross so you could have eternal life and have it more abundantly. That truth is enough to rejoice in the Lord regardless of anything going on in your life. But, knowing Christ more and more will increase your joy. You can know Jesus and know joy. That will lead to a joyful walk.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!