



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Date: 10.05.25 | Paul's Letters While Under House Arrest: Ephesians and Philippians
Scripture: Ephesians and Philippians

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- God values all people and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and people are invited to join Him in His work.
- We are to be involved in reaching the nations through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- The church is a fellowship of believers, and we are called to meet together regularly.
- The church is not a place or a building, but rather a community of people who belong to the family of God.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- God values all people---born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths---and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and as we join Him in His work, He uses people to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- We demonstrate honor for God when we respect the earthly authorities God has placed in our lives.
- The church is a community of believers called to gather regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve, encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.
- The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry.



MEMORY VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Blessed & Joyful

Step 1 – Identity in Christ:

- Ask each student to silently think of one word that describes who God says they are (e.g., loved, chosen, forgiven).
- Go around quickly and have a few students share their word aloud.

Step 2 – Joyful Action:

- Ask students to think of one small way they can show joy or humility to someone this week (helping, encouraging, sharing a smile, listening).
- Optional: Students can either quickly share their idea aloud or keep it in mind.

Step 3 – Wrap-Up:

- Say something like: “Paul reminds us in Ephesians that we are deeply loved and blessed by God. And in Philippians, he shows us that living with joy and humility points others to Christ. This week, we get to live out both who God says we are and how He wants us to act toward others.”

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

When Paul finally arrived in Rome, he did not come as a free missionary, but as a prisoner. He lived under house arrest with a Roman soldier guarding him, yet during this season of chains, the gospel was unchained. Paul wrote several letters that continue to shape Christian faith and practice today. Among them, Ephesians and Philippians stand out as rich treasures of encouragement, theology, and exhortation. Though written from confinement, these letters overflow with joy, hope, and a call to live faithfully in Christ.

The letter to the Ephesians was likely intended to be circulated among many churches in the region, not only the believers in Ephesus. Paul wrote passionately about God’s great love in Jesus Christ and about the believers’ identity in Him. He described the astounding riches that Christians possess because of their union with Christ, warning them not to live as spiritual beggars when, in fact, they are immeasurably wealthy. Paul wanted the church to draw upon this wealth in daily living, rooting their lives in God’s indestructible purposes and in the supremacy of Jesus, who is the center of the universe and the focus of history.

Paul pictured the church as a bride ([Eph. 5:25–27](#)), a temple ([Eph. 2:19–22](#)), and a soldier ([Eph. 6:10–18](#)). These images emphasize unity, holiness, and perseverance in spiritual battle. Paul exhorted believers to eliminate backbiting, gossip, envy, anger, and bitterness, for such things destroy the unity of Christ’s body. Instead, they were to live as a new family of God,

building one another up in love. As he wrote, “I therefore...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” ([Eph. 4:1](#)).

Paul reminded the Ephesians that through Christ they had been adopted into God’s family, forgiven of their sins, and united with other believers in one spiritual household. Their calling was not merely to hear God’s Word but to live it out. He called them to “be imitators of God, as beloved children” ([Eph. 5:1](#)) and to walk as children of light, leaving behind the darkness of their old lives ([Eph. 5:8](#)). He also addressed family relationships, teaching that mutual submission “out of reverence for Christ” ([Eph. 5:21](#)) is the oil that makes marriage and family life flourish.

Perhaps most famously, Paul closed Ephesians with a sober reminder that “Christianity is a battleground, not a playground.” Believers are engaged in spiritual warfare, but God has provided the armor of truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and prayer ([Eph. 6:10–18](#)). With these spiritual weapons, Christians can stand firm against the devil’s schemes.

While Ephesians unfolds the riches of God’s grace and the believer’s calling to unity and holiness, Philippians shines as Paul’s most personal letter, often called the Epistle of Joy. Written to the church he planted in Philippi, a church that supported him financially more than any other, the letter is filled with gratitude, encouragement, and deep affection. The Philippians had sent Paul gifts while he was in prison ([Phil. 2:25; 4:18](#)), and Paul responded by thanking them for their generosity ([Phil. 1:4–5; 4:10–19](#)), updating them on his circumstances ([Phil. 1:12–26](#)), and urging them to continue steadfast in the faith.

Despite his chains, Paul repeatedly pointed them to joy: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” ([Phil. 4:4](#)). He encouraged them to find joy not in their circumstances but in Christ Himself. He also urged them toward humility and unity, pointing to the example of Christ, who “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant” and humbled Himself to death on a cross ([Phil. 2:7–8](#)). This Christlike humility was the key to maintaining harmony within the church.

Paul’s devotion to Christ is evident throughout the letter. For him, the central concern was that “Christ is proclaimed” ([Phil. 1:18](#)), whether through his life or through his death. He urged the Philippians to pursue “the mind of Christ” ([Phil. 2:5](#)), “the knowledge of Christ” ([Phil. 3:8](#)), and “the peace of Christ” ([Phil. 4:7](#)). He reminded them that their faithful citizenship was not Roman but heavenly ([Phil. 3:20](#)), and that their ultimate hope lay in Christ’s return.

What makes Philippians remarkable is Paul’s joy in suffering. Chained to a Roman guard, uncertain of his future, Paul nevertheless overflowed with thanksgiving, love, and encouragement for this faithful congregation. His personal expression of joy and contentment in prison serves as a powerful witness that true joy does not depend on circumstances, but on Christ.

Together, Ephesians and Philippians capture the heart of Paul’s prison witness. From confinement, he proclaimed the riches of God’s grace in Christ, the unity of the church as His body, the necessity of walking in light and love, and the joy of living for Christ above all else.

These letters call believers to love the Lord with an incorruptible love (*Eph. 6:24*), to rejoice in Him always (*Phil. 4:4*), and to live lives worthy of the gospel. Bound in chains, Paul showed the world that while the messenger may be imprisoned, the message of Jesus Christ remains free, powerful, and unstoppable.

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



TELL THE STORY - Ephesians and Philippians

When Paul finally got to Rome, it wasn't the way he imagined. Instead of being free, he was a prisoner. He had to stay in a house with a Roman guard watching him. But even though Paul was chained, God's message was not! Paul continued teaching about Jesus, and while he was there, he wrote letters to the churches and to his friends. Two of those letters were **Ephesians** and **Philippians**.

The letter to the **Ephesians** reminded the church that because they belonged to Jesus, they were rich in God's blessings. They were not poor beggars but children of God! Paul instructed them to live as God's family—loving one another, building each other up, and working together as one body. He gave pictures to help them understand the church: it is like a bride that Jesus loves (Ephesians 5:25-27), like a **temple** where God lives (Ephesians 2:19-22), and like a **soldier** who wears God's armor to fight against the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Paul also reminded the Ephesians that they had once lived in darkness, but now they were children of light (Ephesians 5:8). They were to "be imitators of God" (Ephesians 5:1) and walk in a manner that honored Jesus. Paul told them that following Jesus changes the way we live at home, with friends, and with family. Loving like Jesus means putting others first.

The letter to the **Philippians** is sometimes referred to as the "Joy Letter." Paul wrote to thank the church in Philippi for their help. Even though he was in prison, Paul continued to say, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" (Philippians 4:4). This means we can have joy regardless of our circumstances, because our joy comes from Jesus, not from them.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be humble and to put others first, just like Jesus did when He came to serve and died on the cross (Philippians 2:7-8). Paul instructed them to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, to know Him more intimately, and to remember that their true home was not Rome but heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Both of these letters show us Paul's heart for the church. In **Ephesians**, he reminds us that we are God's family, blessed and strong in Christ, called to live in unity and love. In **Philippians**, he shows us how to rejoice in Jesus, even when life is hard. Paul was in chains, but God's message of salvation was free to everyone.

The big message is this: **Love Jesus with your whole heart. Live in unity with other believers. Rejoice in the Lord always.**



RETELL THE STORY

Have students re-tell the story as best they can.



SHARE THE GOSPEL

Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Philippians remind us that the good news of Jesus changes everything. In Ephesians, Paul shows us that God is building a new spiritual family—one made up of both Jews and Gentiles—through the salvation purchased by Jesus on the cross. God has chosen us, adopted us, and redeemed us in Christ, giving us every spiritual blessing in Him (Ephesians 1:3). Because of Jesus, we have confidence to approach God as His children, not as strangers (Ephesians 3:11-12). This new family isn't just an idea—it's a reality that shapes our lives. We are called to walk in unity, love one another, and live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). The gospel makes us part of God's family, gives us hope for eternal life, and transforms our lives in the present.

In Philippians, Paul lifts up Jesus as the perfect example of humility. Though He was fully God, Jesus "emptied Himself" and came to earth as a servant, even dying on the cross (Philippians 2:5-7). Because of His obedience, God exalted Him and gave Him "the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). Paul urges believers to follow Jesus's example by putting aside selfish ambition and serving one another in love. Even though Paul himself was in prison, he wrote with joy, saying he had "learned the secret of being content...whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12). His joy came not from circumstances but from Christ, who strengthens us. These letters remind us that the gospel calls us into God's family, transforms us to live with humility and unity, and gives us joy no matter what trials we face—because in Christ we already have everything we need.

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

If God has given you every spiritual blessing (*Eph. 1:3*), how can you thank Him today?

Since we're part of God's family (*Eph. 2:19*), how can you show love to another "family member" in Christ this week?

Because you can talk to God with confidence (*Eph. 3:12*), what would you like to pray about right now?

Walking as "children of light" (*Eph. 5:8*) means showing Jesus in how we act—what's one way you can shine His light at school or home?

Jesus chose to be a servant (*Phil. 2:5–7*)—how can you serve someone today?

Since God exalted Jesus (*Phil. 2:9*), how can you worship Him with your whole heart?

Paul learned to be content (*Phil. 4:12–13*). What's one thing you can thank God for—even if it isn't perfect?

Paul told us to live in a way "worthy of the gospel" (*Phil. 1:27*). What's one choice you can make this week that shows you belong to Jesus?

How can you encourage others to trust in God when they might be afraid?

What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?

What does the story teach me about myself?

Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?

Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

How does this story help me live on mission?

PRAYER PROMPTS

Dear God, thank You for making us part of Your family and giving us every blessing in Jesus. Help us to be humble like Jesus, to shine Your light, and to find joy in every situation. Teach us to live in a way that demonstrates our belonging to You. Amen.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - God is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD ➡

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD ➡➡

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?