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PROVERBS 28:1

PHILIPPIANS

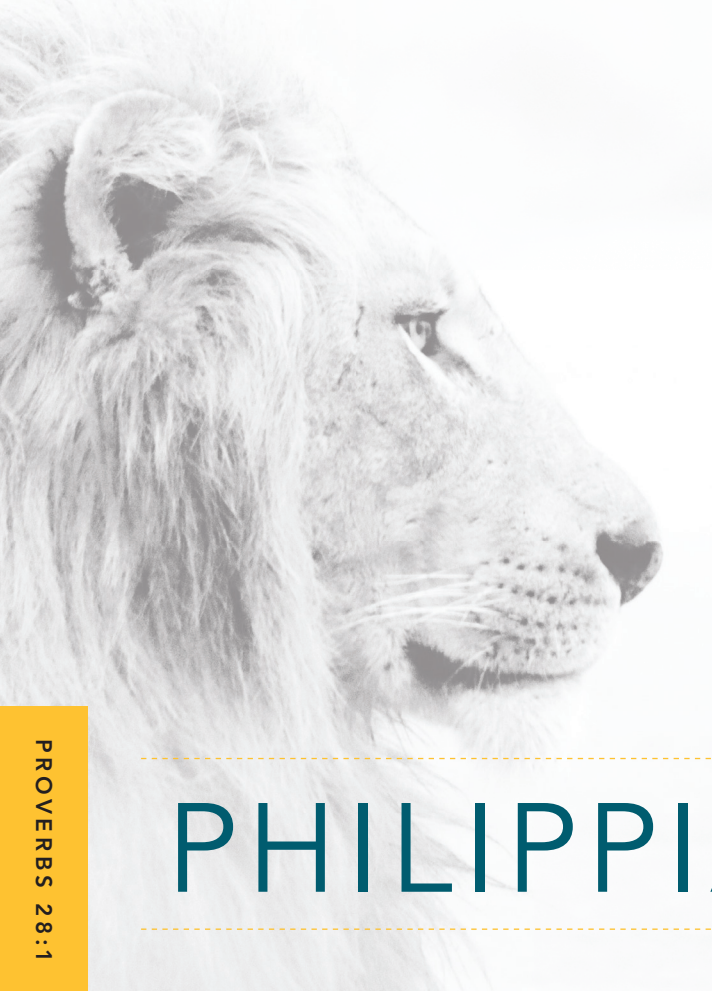
AN EXCERPT FROM THE
COURAGE FOR LIFE™
STUDY BIBLE FOR MEN


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TRANSLATION.

This is a presentation of the apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi from the *Courage for Life Study Bible for Men*, together with an introduction to this Bible.

Courage for Life is designed for spiritual transformation and offers a baked-in pathway for growth. With a Bible study on every page and wide margins, it is perfect for personal inductive study and small group use. You'll find yourself growing in your knowledge of God's Word and its transformative power in your life. The full *Courage for Life Study Bible for Men* (but not this Philippians excerpt) is equipped with the Filament Bible app. Filament gives you the ability to go further in your Bible study, with easy access to curated online content that's relevant to what you're reading.

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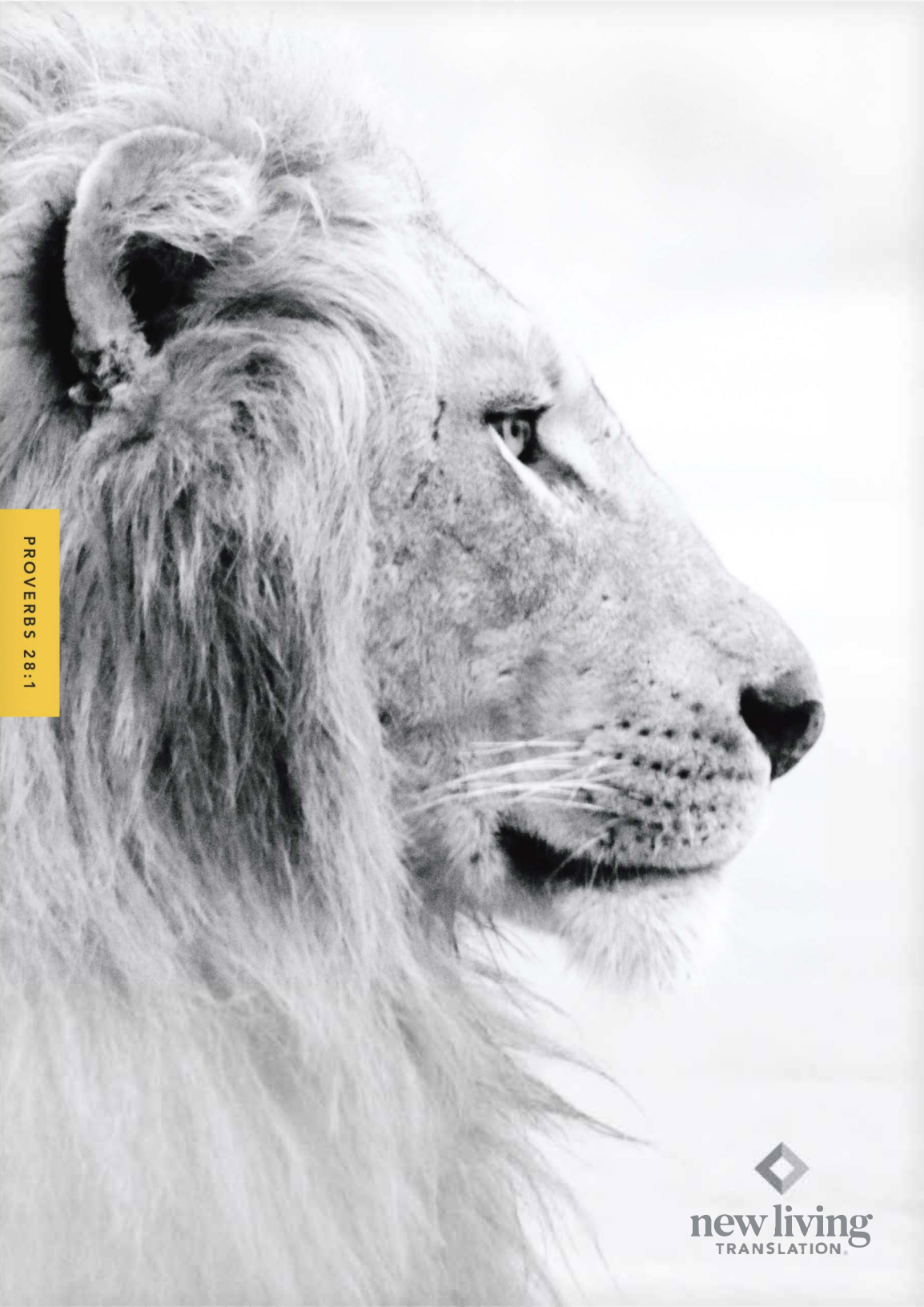
PROVERBS 28:1

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COURAGE FOR LIFE STUDY BIBLE FOR MEN

The book you are holding in your hands is completely unique and one of the most fascinating books of all time. It's a refuge in troubled times, a storehouse of wise counsel for everyday living, and the greatest source of encouragement, hope, and inspiration you will ever possess. The Bible is actually a library of books—sixty-six in all—written over a span of more than 1,500 years. The authors of these books were historians, poets, farmers, prophets, and preachers who were inspired by God to write down real-life events and eternal truths that continue to challenge and encourage us on our journey with God.

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, starts with an overview of the beginning of the universe, focusing on the creation of our world and of the life that exists here. The last book, Revelation, ends with a vision of a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1).

The Bible is God's story, and along the way it chronicles the lives of those who, like you and me, were on a courageous journey—a walk with the Creator, who seeks to reveal himself to his creation. The lessons God's Word teaches us can be summed up in this way:

- We were made by a loving God who wants us to know him personally.
- We rebelled against God, desiring to go our own way.
- Our rebellion separated us from God and brought us under the penalty of righteous judgment.
- God seeks us out while we are in our rebellious state and calls us to return to him.
- We can be restored to a right relationship with our loving God and receive forgiveness for our sins, the gift of abundant life here on earth, and the blessings of eternal life in heaven—but only if we choose to repent of our sins, believe the Good News about Jesus, trust in him alone for salvation, and make him Lord of our lives.

This restoration with our Creator comes in an amazing way—God showed his great love for us by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to be our sacrificial Savior. This plan is revealed throughout Scripture. The first promise of this restoration can be found in Genesis 3:15, right after the fall of Adam and Eve. The first mention of a sacrifice to cover the effects of sin is six verses later (Gen 3:21). Everywhere we look in Scripture, we see God's redemptive plan in action.

If at some point in your life you realized your need for Jesus and surrendered your life to him, God accepted you as his son and now speaks to your heart and soul in response to your commitment to him. When you surrendered to Jesus, he gave you a new heart, one that mirrors his. You then began the courageous journey of faith, which you will be on until you pass from this world and enter the presence of God.

When you believe in Jesus, the Spirit of God resides within you, shaping you into the vessel he wants you to be as a potter shapes a piece of clay (see Isa 29:16; 64:8; Jer 18:2-6 to learn more). Studying the Bible is one way to invite the Holy Spirit to help us know God and to bring us closer to him. This action is a discipline. It does not come naturally or easily. But if you neglect this discipline, you will experience only slow spiritual growth full of roadblocks. However, when you study and gain

an understanding of God's Word—learning who God is and how he wants you to live your life—you will begin to exchange stagnant, slow-paced spiritual growth for growth that brings glory to God and produces transformation in your life.

As we journey together, discovering God's truth for ourselves, remember that studying the Bible is different from reading the Bible. Studying means giving greater attention to what you're reading. In doing so, you'll discover ancient cultures that will fascinate you, confront ideas that will challenge and transform you, read some of the greatest poetry ever written, and come to know the Creator of the universe up close and personally. You will see just how great God's love for you truly is. Studying the Bible will usher you into the adventure of a lifetime, and your submission to its truth will change your life forever.

But Bible study is not just for your own moral and spiritual development, as important as that is. Jesus told his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone" (Mark 16:15). To obey this command, you must be prepared. And Bible study is one of the primary ways you can ready yourself to share God's truth with others. The apostle Paul tells us, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives" (2 Tim 3:16).

The Need for Courage

So now you realize that studying the Bible is essential to having a thriving relationship with your loving God. But where does courage fit into the equation? Why would you need to be courageous to learn what God wants to say to you through the Scriptures?

Because God's Word is life-changing, you will most certainly encounter resistance as you study the Bible and apply its truth to your life. Therefore, you will need to embrace your God-given courage during the process.

According to the author of the book of Hebrews, "our God is a devouring fire" (Heb 12:29), a jealous God who calls everyone to worship him and him alone. And though God told Moses on Mount Sinai, "No one may see me and live" (Exod 33:20), he invites all people to enter a personal relationship with him through his Son, Jesus, and to grow in their relationship with him by studying his Word. Therefore, we need great courage to come before God and meet him face-to-face in the Bible. Thankfully, Jesus allows us to enter God's presence, and the Holy Spirit is our guide.

One of the primary reasons we need courage is that the Bible functions as a mirror to our hearts and souls. When we read God's Word, we see our real selves, without all our masks and pretenses—a sight that, if we're honest, can be somewhat startling at times. It takes courage to face our true selves, yet this is a vital step toward fully embracing the abundant life God has planned for us.

The NT book of James clearly articulates this truth: "For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it" (Jas 1:23-25).

You need courage to face the person the Bible reveals you to be. It takes courage to embrace the transformative process to become the person God created you to be. It will take courage to *do* what the Word says instead of merely *hearing* it. And without taking these courageous steps, you will never fully experience the abundant blessings God so graciously has in store for you. But first, let's learn what we believe to be the best method of studying the Bible.

The Inductive Bible Study Method

We believe the best way to study the Bible is *inductively*. Studying inductively simply means asking investigative questions of the text to discover its intended meaning. When you approach God's Word inductively, you begin with the Bible text, apply established Bible study steps, and discover truths that can either confirm or change the way you think. In other words, you begin with God's Word and learn the truth communicated there. Then you can apply God's truth to what you are experiencing—not the other way around.

It's all about asking the right questions.

When you ask questions of each verse of Scripture (such as "Whom was the message originally delivered to?" "When was the message first given?" or "What did the message mean to its original audience?"), you begin to put the verse in its proper context and prepare yourself to discover a more accurate understanding of God's intended meaning.

Four Basic Bible Study Steps

Four basic steps allow you to study the Bible inductively so you can accurately interpret and apply God's Word. These four basic steps are important for studying Scripture with courage and confidence. In time, these steps will become as natural to you as breathing. Just remember P-O-I-A:

1. **Pray:** As you approach God's Word, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth.
2. **Observe:** Ask, "What does the Bible text say?"
3. **Interpret:** Ask, "What does the Bible text mean?"
4. **Apply:** Ask, "As I reflect on what I've read in God's Word, what do I need to do?"

As Christ's disciple, you should include these steps in your daily reading habits. And as you put these Bible study steps into practice, God will transform you into the image of Christ, our King.

In this study Bible, we want you to focus on individuals and events that demonstrate courage in action. To that end, you will encounter practical teaching about courage on each page as you read through the books of the Bible. Make it your practice to read through each book as you would any other book—straight through and in large chunks, rather than reading verses at random. When you are studying the Bible, we recommend that you commit to focusing on one book at a time. Keep in mind that the authors recorded what God revealed to them, so you are entering a specific point within God's story each time you open God's Word. Fun fact: Chapter and verse numbers were not added to the Bible until hundreds of years after the books were written. Although they weren't in the original manuscripts, these numbers do serve as helpful tools for locating specific content.

HOW TO USE THE COURAGE FOR LIFE STUDY BIBLE FOR MEN

We wrote the feature content of this Bible—the section and book introductions, the Listen to the Word statements, the Courageous Men of Faith profiles, and the inductive Bible studies—to provide you with practical guidance as you pray, observe, interpret, and apply (P-O-I-A) God’s Word.

INTRODUCTIONS

At the beginning of both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT), you will discover informative introductions that give you a basic understanding of each and help you see how each collection of books reveals God’s great love and faithfulness. At the beginning of each Bible book, you will find introductions that answer six important questions: Who is the author? Who is the audience? When was it written? Where did the events take place? What was happening? Why was it written? and How should we read this book? These questions will help you put each book in its proper historical and literary context.

LISTEN TO THE WORD

In the top right-hand corner of many pages, you will find a Listen to the Word feature that encourages you to listen to the NLT audio Bible and replace the lies that this world wants you to believe with truths from God’s Word. The NLT audio Bible can be accessed by scanning the Filament icon at the top of each page. See the instructions on page A9 to begin using Filament today!

COURAGEOUS MEN OF FAITH

Throughout this Bible, you will find eighty-two inspiring features about courageous men of faith. These are the stories of men who appear in the Bible, men of previous historical periods, and men of the twenty-first century. Like all of us, the men featured in this Bible have made their share of mistakes—sometimes public ones. Even so, these imperfect men of faith can be invaluable guides as we navigate our own faith journeys. As you read, thank God for the amazing things he has done through each of these men, and pray for the wisdom and humility to learn from their flaws and failures. You might also discover that you have different beliefs or opinions from some of the men in these features. That’s okay—so do we! Every man remains a work in progress on this side of eternity, with blind spots and shortcomings alongside his strengths and successes. No matter what we may agree or disagree on, the lives and testimonies of these eighty-two men have inspired us to embrace an unshakable and fearless faith in God. We pray that their testimonies will also ignite within you a courageous faith that boldly pursues the abundant life God wants for you.



BIBLE STUDIES

At the bottom of each Scripture page, you will find a study that guides you through the four basic steps of inductive Bible study—Pray, Observe, Interpret, and Apply (P-O-I-A)—and encourages you to apply God’s truth to your life. As you begin each study, you will encounter a prayer that relates to an important theme of the passage you have just read. We encourage you to read the prayer aloud as you prepare to do each study.

Before you begin studying the Bible, we want to share with you a little about the ministry of Courage For Life and how the Seven Steps to COURAGE that you will encounter throughout this Bible came into being.

About Courage For Life

Courage For Life was founded in 2014 to provide resources that help individuals strengthen their relationship with the Lord and embrace their God-given courage for life. Our greatest hope is to see everyone experience the life God intended for them. Therefore, our vision is to multiply those who live courageously and inspire them to pass it on to others who will also embrace their God-given Courage For Life!

At Courage For Life, we believe Jesus transforms lives and that anyone can discover the truth about life, love, themselves, others, and God through the study and application of Scripture. We accept that the Bible reveals truth, making God’s Word a source of authority for our lives and a unique resource for all individuals to know God and receive courage from him.

We recognize that God gives courage by strengthening individuals with the truth of his Word and that he empowers them by the work of the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that we are all stewards of our God-given courage. It is our responsibility to offer our abilities, personalities, responsibilities, resources, giftedness, training, relationships, and experiences—in other words, our entire lives—back to God for his purposes. Therefore, we, the Courage For Life team and board, and our many volunteers and supporters desire to show all people that they not only have value but also can discover truth, experience life transformation, and embrace their God-given courage while stewarding these assets for God’s glory.

About the Seven Steps to COURAGE

The Seven Steps to COURAGE are grounded in biblical principles. When we faithfully implement these life-changing steps, the exercise produces amazing results. Each step strengthens our courage muscles and, ultimately, brings us into a closer relationship with our heavenly Father. And it’s this relationship that enables us to walk with courage, live in grace, and find true joy in the miraculous journey of life.

To learn more about Courage For Life and the Seven Steps to COURAGE, check out the book *Courage For Life* by Ann White.



seven steps to **COURAGE**

NOTE: THE STUDY AT THE BOTTOM OF EVERY BIBLE PAGE GUIDES YOU TO APPLY TWO OF THESE STEPS TO COURAGE IN RESPONSE TO THE READING.

Get ready to unpack the Seven Steps to **COURAGE** you will find throughout this study Bible as you read, study, and apply God's Word to your life!

The Seven Steps to COURAGE

- C COMMIT** to Change
- O OVERCOME** Obstacles
- U UNCOVER** Your True Self
- R REPLACE** Worldly Lies with Scriptural Truth
- A ACCEPT** the Things You Cannot Change
- G GRASP** God's Love for You
- E EMBRACE** a Life of Grace

Together, let's begin the journey of a lifetime—the journey to a more confident, courageous, faith-filled you!

Robbie Goss *Ann Chitt*

Philippians

WHO IS THE AUTHOR? The apostle Paul is the author of this letter, and Timothy was its co-sender (1:1, page 1498). Timothy was a co-sender of five other letters (2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, and Philemon).

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE? The church in Philippi was founded around AD 50 by Paul, Silas, and Timothy during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16, page 1395).

WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN? Philippians is one of the four letters (along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon) that Paul wrote while imprisoned, possibly during his house arrest in Rome (AD 60–62).

WHERE DID THE EVENTS TAKE PLACE? The city of Philippi was in the province of Macedonia (modern-day northern and central Greece). It was located on an important trade route known as the Egnatian Way, which connected Rome with the city of Byzantium (in modern-day Turkey).

WHAT WAS HAPPENING? Paul wanted to thank the Philippians for their generous gift, which had been delivered to Paul by Epaphroditus. Paul also wanted to encourage the Philippians not to be misled by those who insisted that Gentile Christians must adopt Jewish rituals to be saved.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN? Philippians is a letter of encouragement, both to the original recipients and now to us. Paul wrote to encourage believers to maintain joy in suffering and unity in the church for the sake of the gospel's advancement. This letter uses the words *joy* and *rejoice* more than a dozen times, making it one of Paul's most uplifting letters. A key verse is Philippians 1:21 (page 1499).

HOW SHOULD WE READ PHILIPPIANS? As you read Paul's letter to the Philippians, try to think of the most pressing circumstances you are facing, things that may seem impossible to overcome. Paul's message is that we should not look at our present circumstances as the final word. Consider what Paul means when he says, "Don't worry about anything" (4:6, page 1501) and "I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (4:13, page 1503). Even though he was probably chained to a Roman guard as he wrote this letter, Paul said he could rejoice in everything! God is always greater than anything we may face, and he will supply all our needs. Discover how you can follow Paul's confident example to help you courageously face each day.

For Bible books and their abbreviations, see page A7.

For definitions of theological words, see page 1619.

PHILIPPIANS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FOUR SECTIONS:

- 1:1-30 • Paul's joy in living for Jesus.
- 2:1-30 • Examples of joyful humility.
- 3:1-21 • Pressing toward the goal.
- 4:1-23 • Exhortation and encouragement.

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus.

I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders* and deacons.

²May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Paul’s Thanksgiving and Prayer

³Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. ⁴Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, ⁵for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. ⁶And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

⁷So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. ⁸God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

⁹I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. ¹¹May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous

character produced in your life by Jesus Christ*—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Paul’s Joy That Christ Is Preached

¹²And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters,* that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. ¹³For everyone here, including the whole palace guard,* knows that I am in chains because of Christ. ¹⁴And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers* here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message* without fear.

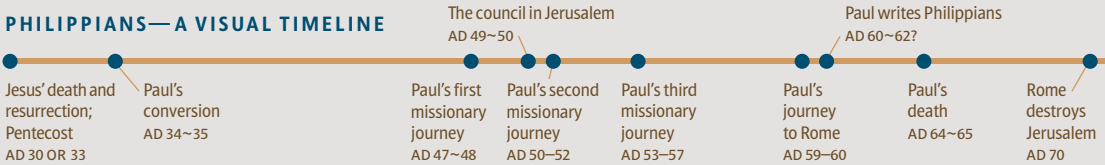
¹⁵It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. ¹⁶They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. ¹⁷Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. ¹⁸But that doesn’t matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. ¹⁹For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance.

Paul’s Life for Christ

²⁰For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue

1:1 Or *overseers*, or *bishops*. 1:11 Greek with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ. 1:12 Greek *brothers*. 1:13 Greek including all the Praetorium. 1:14a Greek *brothers in the Lord*. 1:14b Some manuscripts read *speak the message*.

PHILIPPIANS—A VISUAL TIMELINE



God will finish his work 1:3-6

PRAY • Father, thank you for never giving up on me and for continuing to work in my life. Help me surrender to your work of making me more like Jesus every day.

OBSERVE • Epaphroditus had brought a monetary gift to Paul from the church in Philippi (4:15-18). This letter was Paul’s response to that gift. He began by thanking God and expressing to the church in Philippi that he continued to remember them in prayer with much joy. Paul was confident that God would continue to do good things through their ministry together.

INTERPRET • God always finishes what he starts, and he often works through the gifts of others (Gen 2:2; 1 Sam 3:12; John 4:34; 19:30). He is faithful to complete his salvation in people (Rom 9:16; Eph 1:3-11; 2:4-10). God doesn’t desire that we continue to live the same way we did before we were saved; he continues his good work in us to make us more like Jesus (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13-15).

APPLY • *Embrace a life of grace:* The work God does in our lives isn’t something we can do on our own. How will you embrace God’s work to make you more like Jesus (Phil 1:6)? • *Overcome obstacles:* List the obstacles preventing you from allowing God to work in your life.

What other *COURAGE* steps can you identify in the opening of Paul’s letter? How can you apply them to your life?

to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. ²¹For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. ²²But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. ²³I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. ²⁴But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

²⁵Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. ²⁶And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.

Live as Citizens of Heaven

²⁷Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News.

²⁸Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. ²⁹For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. ³⁰We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

Have the Attitude of Christ

2 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and

compassionate? ²Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

³Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

⁵You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶ Though he was God,* he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.

⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges*;
he took the humble position of a slave*

and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,*

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shine Brightly for Christ

¹²Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep

listen to the Word

Listen to Philippians 1–2, and reject the worldly lie that your circumstances in life should bring you joy. Replace it with the truth that real joy isn't found in your circumstances. Joy is a response to Jesus' sacrifice for you and comes from your relationship with him (see also Ps 16:11; Rom 15:13; Jas 1:2).

2:6 Or *Being in the form of God.* 2:7a Greek *he emptied himself.* 2:7b Or *the form of a slave.* 2:7c Some English translations put this phrase in verse 8.

Jesus is our example 2:1-11

PRAY • Father, guide me to be more like Jesus every day. Help me to adopt his attitude as I faithfully follow you.

OBSERVE • Paul asked four rhetorical questions that should have been answered with a resounding “Yes!” But the church in Philippi was struggling with division among its people. Therefore, Paul encouraged them to work together with one mind and purpose by releasing their selfishness and pride and taking on Jesus’ attitude—humility.

INTERPRET • We receive encouragement, comfort, fellowship, and tender and compassionate hearts through our relationship with God. But when we don't allow God to transform us to be more like Jesus, we go back to our old ways, become prideful, and seek our own interests. Therefore, we must continually follow God in obedience and allow him to change us. Jesus is our example, and he was humbly obedient to the point of death—even a criminal's death on a cross (2:8).

APPLY • *Uncover your true self:* Underline the actions and attitudes in Philippians 2:1-8. Which ones are more difficult for you? How will you allow God to build them into your daily life? • *Commit to change:* Do you recognize any selfishness in your life? Take a moment to journal your commitment to be more like Jesus (2:4-5). Name other *COURAGE* steps these verses motivate you to take. How will you apply them?

reverence and fear. ¹³For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

¹⁴Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. ¹⁷But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God,* just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. ¹⁸Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

Paul Commends Timothy

¹⁹If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. ²⁰I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. ²¹All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. ²²But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. ²³I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. ²⁴And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

Paul Commends Epaphroditus

²⁵Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. ²⁶I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill.

2:17 Greek I will rejoice even if I am to be poured out as a liquid offering. 2:29 Greek in the Lord. 3:1 Greek brothers; also in 3:13, 17. 3:3 Some manuscripts read worship God in spirit; one early manuscript reads worship in spirit.

²⁷And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

²⁸So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. ²⁹Welcome him in the Lord's love* and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. ³⁰For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away.

The Priceless Value of Knowing Christ

3 Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters,* rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

²Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. ³For we who worship by the Spirit of God* are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

⁵I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

⁷I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸Yes, everything else is worthless when com-

belief over behavior 3:2-11

PRAY • Father, I am grateful that nothing I've done—positive or negative—changes your love or your desire to have a relationship with me.

OBSERVE • Paul warned the Philippians against the influence of Jewish Christians who believed God required circumcision for salvation. He made it clear that those who trust in the work of Jesus Christ alone are genuinely saved (3:3). Paul then unpacked his own background. Though it was impressive, he considered it worthless. Paul knew that true faith is the only requirement for salvation.

INTERPRET • Many believe they are saved simply by saying and doing the right things. But our hope isn't based on being good. It is grounded in the redemptive work of Christ alone. Everyone has sinned, and we all fall short of God's glorious standard (Rom 3:23). So first we must trust Jesus—not our works—for salvation. Then we allow God to transform our behavior and make us more like Jesus. It doesn't work the other way around.

APPLY • *Accept the things*

you cannot change: Will you accept that salvation is a free gift and doesn't depend on your works (Phil 3:3)? Journal your response. • **Embrace a life of grace:** Reflect on how you may have modified your behavior to be good enough for God. Will you believe the truth that salvation rests on Christ alone (3:9)?

As you meditate on this passage, what other **COURAGE** steps do you feel called to take?

pared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ⁹ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ.* For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.¹⁰ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,¹¹ so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Pressing toward the Goal

¹²I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.¹³ No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it,* but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

¹⁵Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you.¹⁶ But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.

¹⁷Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.¹⁸ For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ.¹⁹ They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life

here on earth.²⁰ But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.²¹ He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

4 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,* stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

Words of Encouragement

²Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.³ And I ask you, my true partner,* to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

⁴Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.*

⁶Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

⁸And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and

listen to the Word

Listen to Philippians 3, and reject the worldly lie that you can't be a Christian unless you are good enough. Replace it with the truth that your background and past actions do not define you. God welcomes you just as you are (see also Isa 43:18-19; Acts 3:19-21; 2 Cor 5:17).

3:9 Or *through the faithfulness of Christ*. 3:13 Some manuscripts read *not yet achieved it*. 4:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 4:8. 4:3 Or *loyal Syzygus*. 4:5 Greek *the Lord is near*.

true joy is found in Jesus 4:4-9

PRAY • Father, thank you for the true joy I can find only in my relationship with you. Help me to experience your love, joy, and peace today.

OBSERVE • Paul encouraged the Philippians to always be full of joy, to be considerate, and not to worry. Just as Paul wanted the Philippians to be filled with joy, Jesus expected the same for his disciples (John 15:11; 16:24). Jesus promises that we will have abundant joy as we learn to trust and depend fully on him. This is the same “joy” the wise men felt when they saw the star of Bethlehem as they traveled in search of the promised King (Matt 2:10).

INTERPRET • Joy is a response to Jesus and isn't determined by our circumstances. True joy cannot be faked. Christians can have joy in both good and bad times because we know Jesus and experience his presence. When we find joy in our relationship with Christ, we experience his inexplicable peace in all situations.

APPLY • *Grasp God's love for you:* God loves you and cares about your needs (Phil 4:6). Take time right now to tell him what you need and to thank him for all he has done. • *Embrace a life of grace:* As you pray, journal your experience of God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand (4:7).

In response to God's love, joy, and peace, what other **COURAGE** steps are you encouraged to take?

Jesse Bushyhead

COURAGEOUSLY COMMITTED

Jesse Bushyhead was born in 1804 on a small Cherokee settlement in Tennessee. He was raised in indigenous Cherokee culture. At the age of twenty-six, Jesse was baptized as a Christian, and he was ordained as a minister several years later. He then established and pastored a church in his hometown.

Jesse was known as a gifted interpreter. He formed a ministry partnership with Welsh missionary Evan Jones, who preached in English while Jesse translated into the Cherokee language. Jesse became an assistant missionary with the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions and translated parts of the Bible and other Christian books into Cherokee.

During the 1830s, the US government forced self-governing indigenous nations to give up their farms and homes in the southeastern United States and move west of the Mississippi River. After gold was discovered in the southeastern United States, all treaties with the Cherokee nation that protected their ancestral homelands were declared null and void. Cherokees were ordered to move west into what is now the state of Oklahoma. Jesse protested this treatment but was unable to negotiate a resolution.

Large groups of Cherokee people were rounded up like cattle by soldiers and forced from their ancestral homelands on a journey that came to be known as the Trail of Tears. Food was scarce. One-fourth of all Cherokees who made the journey died, often from whooping cough, cholera, or drowning while crossing rivers. Jesse led one group of nearly 1,000 people. Throughout the six-month journey, Jesse continued to pastor his people.

On arriving in Oklahoma, Jesse established a church. He became the chief justice of the Cherokee nation in 1840 and served in that capacity until 1844, when he died after a brief illness. Jesse loved his people, the Cherokee. He led many of them to Christ and served them as a pastor during tragic circumstances. The monument at his grave describes him as a devoted Christian, noble in character and heart.

In the face of injustice and suffering, Jesse remained devoted to God and to his people. When you suffer injustice or oppression, how will you remain loyal first to the Lord and also to those who rely on you? What step will you take today to courageously stand firm in this commitment?

Learn more about Jesse Bushyhead's courageous story in Cherokee in Controversy: The Life of Jesse Bushyhead by Dan B. Wimberly.

saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Paul's Thanks for Their Gifts

¹⁰How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. ¹¹Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. ¹²I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³For I can do everything through Christ,* who gives me strength. ¹⁴Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty.

¹⁵As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. ¹⁶Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than

once. ¹⁷I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness.

¹⁸At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

²⁰Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen.

Paul's Final Greetings

²¹Give my greetings to each of God's holy people—all who belong to Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. ²²And all the rest of God's people send you greetings, too, especially those in Caesar's household.

²³May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

4:23 Some manuscripts add *Amen*.

listen to the Word

Listen to Philippians 4, and reject the worldly lie that God doesn't care about your needs and will never meet them. Replace it with the truth that God does care about your needs and satisfies them according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (see also Ps 40:17; Matt 6:25; 2 Cor 12:9).

Jesus gives us strength 4:11-13

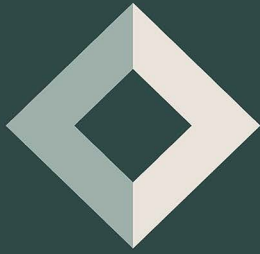
PRAY • Father, thank you for Jesus and his strength. Help me to surrender to your will so that I may find true contentment no matter what my circumstances are.

OBSERVE • Paul continued to show his appreciation to the Philippians for their gifts, but he didn't want them to miss out on an essential truth: Even during Paul's imprisonment, he was content. He shared the secret to his contentment—Jesus was providing him with strength. The Philippians' gifts were crucial to Paul's ministry. Still, it was only by Jesus' strength that Paul could declare he was content in *all* things.

INTERPRET • Paul demonstrated amazing dependence on God throughout his life and ministry. He wholly relied on God for the power and ability to thrive in all situations. We can have the same strength that Paul had, but first we must surrender to God and his will. Only then can we find contentment in Jesus regardless of the circumstances that come our way.

APPLY • *Overcome obstacles:* What obstacles do you need to overcome to fully surrender your life to God (4:12-13)? • *Commit to change:* Journal your commitment to depend on God, not on worldly things, for your contentment (4:11).

As you finish the book of Philippians, what additional **COURAGE** steps will you commit to applying to your life?



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