

Teaching Tips

January 1
Bible Study Guide 5

Words You Should Know

A. Submit (Ephesians 5:22) *hupotasso* (Gk.)—To voluntarily cooperate, assume responsibility, and carry a burden

B. Provoke (6:4) *parorgizo* (Gk.)—To rouse to wrath, exasperation, or anger

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Family Matters. The writer of Ephesians states that family members should love and care for one another just as Christ loves and cares for the church; the writer of 1 John says that we must put our love in action and make loving others our way of life.

A. Pray for your students and lesson clarity.

B. Prayerfully study the entire lesson.

C. Prepare the companion lesson in the *Precepts For Living*® Study Guide.

D. Be prepared through your studies to discuss different “love languages”—how we show love to others and how we want others to show love to us.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Open the class with prayer.

B. Share examples of family dynamics that may cause confusion in the family.

C. Lead the class in reading the Aim for Change in unison.

D. Read the In Focus story. Discuss.

E. Share different ways that people show love to each other (love languages).

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Ask for a volunteer to read the Focal Verses.

B. Drive the discussion of the verses, utilizing the material from The People, Places, and Times, Background, and More Light on the Text.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Have students complete the Search the Scriptures section in pairs. Discuss.

B. Read and answer the Discuss the Meaning questions.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Summarize the Application for Activation section.

B. Summarize today’s lesson.

C. Ask for prayer requests and end the session with prayer, thanking God for creating families.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Christ’s Love for the Church

Song: “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

Devotional Reading: John 3:16–21

Christ's Love

Bible Background • EPHESIANS 5:21–6:4

Printed Text • EPHESIANS 5:21–6:4 | Devotional Reading • JOHN 3:16–21

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: COMPARE Christ's love for the church with the relationships among family members; APPRECIATE Christ's sacrifice to show love and care for the church; and ACCEPT responsibility for showing love in the family as Christ demonstrated love for the church.

In Focus

Angie's heart broke as she read through her students' papers. Angie had assigned her fifth-grade students an assignment that began, "I wish..." as a way to get them thinking about the New Year. The students were instructed to write at least two sentences on the topic.

Angie expected to read things like "I wish we could go on vacation to Disneyland," or "I wish I could have a new computer." Instead, 15 out of 20 students wrote about their families:

"I wish my dad would come back."

"I wish my parents didn't fight all the time."

"I wish I could get good grades so my parents would love me."

"I wish my brother wasn't so mean."

"I wish my mom's boyfriend didn't live with us."

"I wish we could have Christmas all together for once."

Angie bowed her head over the papers and wept. Her students needed the love of Christ to permeate their lives and transform their families. She prayed for the upcoming year to bring these students and their families Christ's peace and love.

Strong families are built upon the foundation of Christ's love for the church. In this lesson, we will see how serving one another in love creates an atmosphere where families can grow and thrive.

Keep in Mind

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."
(Ephesians 5:21, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Ephesians 5:21** Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The People, Places, and Times

A Household Code. The verses found in Ephesians 5:21–6:4 comprise what is called a household code. At the time Paul wrote Ephesians, many Romans were concerned that religions such as Judaism and Christianity would negatively influence traditional Roman family values. To allay these fears and show their support for these values, Christians, Jews, and other religious groups would often employ a standard form of statements. Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to give God's directives for family. Also known as household codes, the statements were often broken down into discussions of husband and wife, and father and children.

Background

In Ephesians 5, Paul calls on believers to live out a life of holiness in relation to the world around them. He challenges them to live wisely, being led by the Spirit. Such a life will produce a believer who becomes more like Christ every day. As we become more like Christ, we will learn to respect and submit to others in love and humility. The foundation of family relationships is to be modeled after Christ's love for the church.

At-A-Glance

1. Wives' Submission Should Reflect Christ's Authority Over the Church (Ephesians 5:21–24)
2. Husbands' Love for Their Wives Should Reflect Christ's Love for the Church (vv. 25–33)
3. Children Should Be Obedient and Loved (Ephesians 6:1–4)

In Depth

1. Wives' Submission Should Reflect Christ's Authority Over the Church (Ephesians 5:21–24)

Ephesians 5:21 is a general instruction to all believers to submit to one another in love. This principle is directly associated with verse 18, where Paul instructs believers to be filled with the Spirit. When we are living a Spirit-led life, God gives us the grace to live in an attitude of humility and submission to others. Paul addresses the wives first. He instructs wives to submit to their husbands “as unto the Lord” (verse 22). The word “submit” in this verse means to yield one’s rights or to cooperate. This word does not imply slavish obedience or being silent in the home. Though the household codes of ancient days often required a wife to obey her husband, Paul does not make this a requirement, as he does for children. Rather, he appeals to a wife’s dedication to God as a basis for submission to her husband. In other words, when a wife honors and respects her husband, she submits to God and His plan for the family.

In verse 23, Paul explains why a wife is to submit to her husband: because he is the “head” of the wife and family just as “Christ is the head of the church.” Christ was appointed by God to be the head of the church. On the basis of this

authority, the church is to submit to Him. Some people might conclude from these verses that there is an inequality between male and female. But Paul makes clear that in Christ, all are equal (see also 1 Corinthians 11:8–12; Galatians 3:28). Within this equality, however, order and respect for authority should exist.

2. Husbands' Love for Their Wives Should Reflect Christ's Love for the Church (vv. 25–33)

Paul now turns his attention to the husbands. Interestingly, he does not stress the husband’s authority or headship over the wife. Instead, Paul charges the husband to love his wife. And not only is the husband supposed to love the wife, he is to love her “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (v. 25). A husband’s love for his wife is to follow the pattern of Christ’s love for the church. Christ’s love for the church was self-sacrificing. A self-sacrificing love is unselfish love. A husband with self-sacrificing love will demonstrate his love by seeking the best for his wife. This kind of love is committed and faithful, even through rough times. This kind of love does not depend on emotions or circumstances but strives to hold the marriage together forever. A loving, Christ-like husband will also provide for his wife. Just as the church is the body of Christ, a wife is a part of her husband. God says that a husband should love his wife just as he loves himself. As a husband nourishes, protects, and provides for his wife, he “loves himself” (vv. 28, 29). Christ’s love for the church is a secure love. The love of a husband for his wife should be the same (verse 31). When a couple marries, they become “one flesh.” Paul explains this as part of the “mystery” of marriage (v. 32). Within the security of this relationship, a wife can submit to her husband.

3. Children Should Be Obedient and Loved (Ephesians 6:1–4)

After discussing the husband-wife relationship, Paul now gives specific instructions to children. Children are exhorted to obey their parents “in the Lord,” that is, in the spirit of obedience as if they were obeying God (6:1). Paul also instructs children to obey their parents because it is the right thing to do. Obedience to parents is also a commandment of God (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). And according to Ephesians 6:1–3, when a child honors, respects, and obeys his parents, that child is blessed. Just as children have a responsibility to obey their parents, parents also have responsibilities to their children. In verse 4, Paul speaks specifically to fathers as the head of the family. He first gives the fathers a negative instruction—“do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them” (v. 4, NLT). A father’s role in his child’s life makes a direct impact on the child’s concept of God the Father. Fathers, therefore, need to be watchful and consider how their behavior influences their children’s actions. Unreasonable expectations, harsh or unfair punishment, or playing favorites will dishearten a child and can lead to disillusionment or rebellion.

Instead of these behaviors, fathers are encouraged positively to “Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord” (v. 4). It is the father’s responsibility to see that his children are being raised according to God’s principles. Fathers are to nurture their children, which means to care for them tenderly and to lead them gently into God’s ways. Therefore, parents are to give correction and instruction with the goal of developing their child’s character and pointing the child toward righteousness. We give our children a great gift when we teach them how to obey God and His Word.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why are believers commanded to submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)?
2. How are wives to submit to their husbands (v. 22)?
3. How are husbands to love their wives (v. 25)?
4. What specific instructions does Paul give to fathers (Ephesians 6:4)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What does Paul mean when he says that wives should submit to their husbands just as the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:24)?
2. How can a husband love his wife as his own body (v. 28)? Why is this important?

Liberating Lesson

In our post-Christian culture, we are witnessing the breakdown of the family unit. Marriages are disintegrating. Children are disobedient and disrespectful to parents and others in authority. Families are important to God. He created them! He also laid out specific principles for creating a loving, harmonious family life. When we live according to these principles, a godly family is the result. And a godly, harmonious family is a living testimony to Christ’s love for the church.

Application for Activation

How can we serve one another in the home in the name and Spirit of Christ? Think about your relationship with each family member. Are you following God’s principles for family life? Pray that God would show you areas that need improvement, and then be willing to change and grow. Pray for your family members that they, too, would be willing to follow God’s plan for your family. If possible, pray together as a family, committing to grow together in God’s ways.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Ephesians 5:21–6:4

5:21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

A key word in this text is “submission” (Gk. *hupotasso*, hoop-ot-AS-so), and it lays a framework for a discussion on how to discharge Christian duties in dynamic relationships of mutuality in an act of true Christian spirituality. This idea, put forth in the text, suggests the potential danger that individualism poses against a true community life. Individualism should not be expressed without the intention to willingly bear one another’s burdens for

the sake of Christ. Whenever there is true submission for the sake of the Lord, it leads to a heart that is penetrated with a deep sense of obligation. True submission seeks not to repudiate or dominate others in a relationship.

It is within this context that the word “submission” indicates reverence to God and His divine principles. This is a means to cultivate a submissive spirit, which values and seeks to unselfishly support, love, and respect others for the sake of Christ. Paul laid this framework for his teaching regarding the marriage relationship and true harmony in the home. Paul underscored how a husband and a wife, through devotion for the sake of Christ, must dutifully exercise love and respect for each other in a marriage relationship. Paul illustrated how the relationship should exist between husbands and wives when he drew on the analogy of Jesus Christ and the Church. The verb, “submit,” connotes an understanding of “voluntarily placing under,” or “ordering oneself under” a leader or an authority source. The Church subjects itself to the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head. It does this in compliance with God’s authority.

In the same way, wives are instructed to submit, in a marital relationship, to the husband. They should do so in acknowledgment of the fact that God ordained the husband as the head of the household. This divine arrangement is for the sake of producing ordered household conditions. These are necessary to bring glory to God’s name and peace in family life. This is God’s pattern of true governance or leadership. The contextual meaning of the word “head” (Gk. *kephale*, kef-al-AY), in verse 23 has different possible meanings. “Head” may denote a “source.” It may also refer to leadership. “Source” evokes an understanding of delegated authority from a higher being or power to be exercised with great responsibility. In other words, it does not imply that the wife should act like a mindless person in the relationship.

“Leadership” means loving and listening to those who are appointed as our leaders. We love them by carrying out given responsibilities in a manner that takes into consideration the feelings of others. We assess their strengths and weaknesses. In this interpretation, a wife submits to the husband. The husband must seek the holistic welfare of his wife and the entire household. He does this out of reverence for God and the position God has given him. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, exercises His authority as the leader of the Church. Jesus Christ helps the Church overcome evil forces that seek to undermine God’s purpose for His people.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

The Greek word *agapao* (ag-ap-AH-o) refers to a person who has subordinated his or her own desires for the benefit of others in a relationship. It expresses virtue that encourages people to act by building others in love. Jesus Christ expressed this kind of love to the Church when He laid down His life so that the Church could be developed. In Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, he stated that Christ restrained Himself from engaging in a lifestyle that would put personal glory over God’s purpose. Christ had to make “himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7) so He could fully serve God’s purpose for the Church. The goal was to fulfill God’s purpose by serving the needs of God’s people through His death on the Cross. In the same way, husbands are

admonished to follow the example of Christ to serve the needs of their wives. God has given to the Church spiritual and moral responsibilities. These must be carried out with great maturity. After all, the Scriptures teach that, as a result of the grace of Christ’s redemptive work of love, believers must act as “workers together with Him” (2 Corinthians 6:1, NKJV).

In Ephesians 5:26–27, the love that Christ is motivated by the sanctifying and cleansing of the Church. Sanctification and cleansing of Christ’s church leads to its glorification in the midst of a world characterized by sin. This implies that in a marital context, it is important to work toward values of purity of thoughts and actions. Therefore, the Christian household must refrain from building its hope on material wealth and power. The *agape* (ag-AH-pay) love of Christ in the heart, and motivation to live in harmony and holiness to bring glory to God, should be the central foundation on which husbands and wives build their homes.

In verse 28, the Apostle Paul emphasizes the basic foundations that God put in place for Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:23–25). This imagery of the marital relationship, in which Adam declared Eve as the “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh,” represents forcefully a unique kind of spiritual and bodily union (2:23). It also symbolizes Adam’s love for his wife. Without any reservation, he understood that his wife was part of his own spiritual, physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. This is an application of Jesus’ second greatest commandment that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). In this case, one’s spouse is the closest neighbor and each one should think of the other as he or she would of themselves. It gives a clear picture of how Christ loved the Church, His own body, and died for it.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the

Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

The two key words in these verses are “nourisheth” (Gk. *ektrepho*, ek-TREF-o) and “cherisheth” (Gk. *thalpo*, THAL-po). The word “nourisheth” also means providing sustenance and attending carefully to others’ needs. It means that the husband is called to participate in the personal life of his wife. He is to meet her holistic needs in a manner that brings about progress in the marriage relationship, as ordained by God. However, this idea does not mean that the wife is inferior to the husband. The author is simply emphasizing the husband’s responsibility to play his role as a God-ordained leader of the family or household. Second, by the use of the word “cherisheth,” the writer is referring to a husband’s promise to his wife to nurture, protect, and shelter her in all situations. A marriage relationship and a Christian family that thrives on mutual support are informed and influenced by God’s way of expressing love.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Verse 31 seems to be the central and organizing phrase in the pericope of verses 22–33. These verses focus on marriage life and building an authentic relationship in a family context based on true love. The key phrases “shall a man leave,” “joined unto his wife” and “shall be one flesh” are grounded on Genesis 2:24. Marriage has been presented as the fundamental relationship between a man and woman. It requires characteristics of devotion that inspire self-sacrifice, deep affection, and total commitment. The new bond that marriage involves transcends any attachment or commitment to other forms of relationships that are outside the marriage context. People

must “leave” anything (except worshipping God) that stands between the love relationship between husbands and wives. The “joining,” in this context, is a work of God’s grace. It is also the corresponding responsibility of the man and woman, who are involved in the marriage, to mutually extend their love and personalities to each other in a special manner based on love. This approach suggests a covenant relationship. In this covenant relationship, God’s power and grace enable the two people to be bonded to each other in love. Because they have become “one flesh,” they are bonded together in a corporeal relationship and are sustained by mutual respect and love for each other. Each completely needs the other.

In Ephesians 5:32, Paul connected the marriage relationship with the “great mystery” of God’s plan of salvation. This plan was concealed but was later unfolded through the redemptive work of Christ and the ministry of His apostles. The Greek word used for “mystery” was *musterion* (moos-TAY-ree-on). Its use in this context denotes the truth about Christ’s great love and concern for the Church. This love cannot be fully grasped by the power of the mind without the help of the Holy Spirit.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Here, the Apostle Paul summarizes the quality of marriage relationships necessary for building a healthy Christian home by once again admonishing the husband to “love his wife” and the wife to “see that she reverence her husband.” This is the model that Christ laid down in the Scriptures.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may

be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

This new chapter opens with a shift from husband-wife relationship to a relationship between parents and children. In this context, Paul now lays out reciprocal duties and responsibilities between parents and children. First, children were instructed to obey their parents, similar to the preceding exhortation that was given to wives to submit to their husbands. This instruction follows the divine structure in how God delegated authority and leadership. This delegated authority and leadership has been structured on the heavenly framework of “ordered relationships.” Children have been instructed to “honour thy father and mother” through an appeal to Old Testament Scriptures (v. 2). This appeal reinforces divine and ordered spiritual authority that has been structured from God’s perspective (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). There are two basic elements that easily catch the attention of the reader. First, it is “right” for children to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1). Second, the writer reminds children that the Old Testament commandment quoted in this passage was the only one that had a promise attached to it. On one hand, the word “right” is present because it was proper in that society for children to obey their parents. On the other hand, the word “promise” brings encouragement to children that their obedience to parents has both personal and community implications. Because children listen to their parents, they are able to live good lives. This line of action will prevent the children from falling prey to temptations and lifestyles that may be destructive to their well-being. In terms of community life, children’s disobedience to parents may lead to a breakdown of family bonds. The result would be a community’s eventual destruction.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Parents have been instructed not to “provoke” (Gk. *parorgizo*, par-org-ID-zo) their children to anger. The etymology of the word “provoke” carried the sense of a “capricious,” “domineering,” and “over-stretched” exercise of authority by parents on their children. Parents were instructed not to put unreasonably harsh demands or expectations on their children, to refrain from always being negative and condemning, and to treat their children fairly without humiliating them. Parents should be intentional in training, educating, nurturing, and loving their children. By the Lord’s assistance, parents prepare children for success in both secular and Christian communities. Parents should realize that their children are God’s gift as a heritage. Therefore, parents are responsible to love, discipline, teach, and care for their children in a way that brings glory to God.

Sources:

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Say It Correctly

Nurture. **NUR**-cher.
Admonition. ad-muh-**NISH**-un.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Is Love
(1 John 4:7–12)

TUESDAY

God's Gift of Love
(John 3:16–21)

WEDNESDAY

The Proof of God's Love
(Romans 5:6–11)

THURSDAY

The Example of Jesus' Love
(John 13:1–9)

FRIDAY

Abiding in Christ's Love
(John 15:9–17)

SATURDAY

Following the Commands of Christ
(1 John 3:18–24)

SUNDAY

Following the Example of Christ
(Ephesians 5:21–6:4)

Notes

Teaching Tips

January 8
Bible Study Guide 6

Words You Should Know

A. Praetorian Guard (Philippians 1:13, RSV, NAS)—Roman imperial bodyguard or member of troops that were assigned to the governors of various Roman provinces

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Motives and Messages. In a media-driven world, we hear many messages without fully knowing what motivates the messenger. Paul claimed that regardless of the person's intentions, the result was still that Christ is proclaimed in every way.

A. Pray for your students and lesson clarity.

B. Prayerfully study the entire lesson.

C. Complete the companion *Precepts For Living*® Study Guide.

D. Bring slips of paper to class.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Open with prayer—praying the Lesson Aim.

B. Give each class member a slip of paper and ask them to do the following: Share a time when your faith was challenged.

C. Instruct them not to write their names on the papers and pass them to you. Read a few of their responses aloud and discuss them.

D. Read today's In Focus story. Discuss the fact that when faced with a life-threatening situation, our faith may be challenged.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Ask for a volunteer to read the Focal Verses.

B. Use The People, Places, and Times, Background, At-A-Glance outline, and More Light on the Text sections to drive the discussion of the verses.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Review the information under Search the Scriptures, Discuss the Meaning, and Liberating Lesson sections. Discuss.

B. Examine why it seems most believers gain strength through trials and suffering.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Summarize the lesson.

B. Remind students to read the Daily Bible Readings.

C. Receive prayer requests and close with prayer.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: Proclaiming Christ

Song: "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:169–176

Proclaiming Christ

Bible Background • PHILIPPIANS 1:12–30

Printed Text • PHILIPPIANS 1:15–26 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 119:169–176

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: COMPREHEND Paul's message of joy in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; REFLECT on the variety of motives for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and FASHION a personal proclamation of the Gospel.

In Focus

Warren and Deloris drove home from the doctor's office in silence. They both had a hundred thoughts passing through their heads. The doctor had actually said the word: cancer. If he were to live at all, Warren would have to undergo surgery and extensive chemotherapy. They would have to break the news to their children and grandchildren. Warren would also have to tell the church.

"Well," Warren finally broke their silence, "this will certainly put my faith to the test. Now I must live what I have preached for so long."

"Baby, don't try to deny what you are really feeling about this. Not for my sake, not for the children's, and not for the church's sake, either," Deloris responded.

"It's not that," Warren said. "I know that people will be watching me. It's important to me that I will be able to praise the Lord throughout this ordeal, whether it means life or death. If I can't, I'll end up feeling like my entire life, not to mention my faith, has been just a front."

Many things come into our lives that challenge our public witness. People are watching to see if we are for real. Paul teaches us how to walk with God through the fires of life.

Keep in Mind

"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."
(Philippians 1:18, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV Philippians 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed,

but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

The People, Places, and Times

Prison. During the time that the New Testament was written, people could be imprisoned for nonpayment of debt (Matthew 5:25–26), political insurrection, criminal acts (Luke 23:19, 25), and for certain religious practices (Acts 8:3). The Apostle Paul was often in prison. On one occasion, he and Silas were placed under the charge of a lone jailer, who put them in an inner cell and placed their feet in stocks (Acts 16:23–24). The inner cell was probably for maximum security or solitary confinement. In Jerusalem, Paul was detained in a Roman barracks (Acts 23:11–18). In Caesarea, Paul's confinement did allow him some freedom, and he was allowed to have visitors (Acts 23:33–35). As he awaited trial in Rome, Paul was guarded constantly under a type of house arrest (Acts 28:16–17, 30). While there, he met his own expenses and was free to receive visitors and preach the Gospel.

Roman Empire. In the early days of the Christian movement, several emperors ruled the empire. Most of Paul's ministry is believed to have occurred under the reign of Gaius (Caligula, A.D. 37–41) and his aging uncle Claudius (A.D. 41–54). Claudius reportedly expelled some Jews from Rome because they were creating disturbances with their efforts to spread the Gospel. It is believed that both Paul and Peter were martyred during Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68), perhaps in connection with the burning of Rome in A.D. 64, an event for which Nero blamed Christians.

Background

It's interesting how some people can devote themselves to encouraging others in the midst of their own struggle. Many terminally-ill children, instead of feeling sorry for themselves, have been a source of encouragement for the families they leave behind. Paul was encouraging to his Christian family. Even

as he sat in prison, his letter was full of love, encouragement, and instruction for those who were carrying on the work. It is very likely that his co-laborers in Christ were feeling worse about Paul's imprisonment than he was. Paul recognized that his release from prison was uncertain. However, as he contemplated his fate, Paul did not lose faith in God. He did not become bitter or angry about his circumstances. He did not cease the work to which he had been called. Through good times and trials, Paul remained faithful to God and his task.

At-A-Glance

1. A New Effort (Philippians 1:15–18)
2. A Certain Victory (vv. 19–26)

In Depth

1. A New Effort (Philippians 1:15–18)

Paul's confinement led to many new efforts to spread the Gospel. No one particular movement could do the work. Some followers were stronger because Paul was in jail. Perhaps they felt they had to fill in the gap left by Paul's absence. Paul called into question the motives of those who were preaching about Christ. Some were preaching out of "envy and strife" (v. 15), while others were preaching out of genuine goodwill. Some may have been jealous of the attention Paul was receiving despite his imprisonment. This very well may have been the case in Rome where Christianity had been established before Paul came. His presence there may have posed a threat to the Christian leaders who were already there. Some were likely vying for Paul's leadership role within the Christian community, assuming he would not be released. His rivals must have felt that their success would cause Paul to become jealous, perhaps adding to his troubles. Instead, he

rejoiced that others were spreading the Gospel, regardless of their motives. Paul recognized that the Gospel is powerful enough to transcend human pettiness. If this were not so, the spread of the Gospel would have stopped at Calvary. There is no human who is truly worthy to preach the Gospel. It is fallen human nature to be affected by envy, strife, egotism, narcissism, and partisanship. From the pulpit, all kinds of motives fuel the Sunday morning sermon. Still, the Gospel is preached, and people come to Christ. Paul's solution was to continue making the Gospel known and rejoice that it came through multiple means. The Good News cannot be held hostage to human imperfection. No one can alter its power. Not even the worst example of Christianity can take away the power of the Gospel. Paul's message has many implications for the Christian community today.

2. A Certain Victory (vv. 19–26)

Paul was confident that his experience—of being both jailed and harassed by rival Christians—would lead to victory. He wrote confidently of salvation as a result of his circumstances (v. 19). Some translations refer to Paul's "deliverance," and others suggest that he was referring to salvation in its fullest sense. The latter is that full redemption would be realized through Christ. The apostle was sure of his dependency on Christ for the impending victory. He quoted Job 13:16 (the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures) where Job looked confidently to his ultimate vindication. There is no indication, however, that Paul was certain of his release from prison, nor did he appear to be excessively concerned about it. Paul's primary concern was not with life or death, as determined by the outcome of his trial. He appears to have been chiefly concerned with his own constitution, that he would not be afflicted with any manner of shame. Instead, he hoped for Christ to be "magnified" (Philippians

1:20). Paul was not looking to be a hero. He was willing to meet his fate, whether life or death, so that all could see how much Christ meant to him.

Paul stood at the crossroads between life and death. The apostle found favor in either outcome. Paul had no desire to escape death in favor of life. He viewed death as a portal into the greater realm of a life already filled with greatness. To Paul, life was Christ, who gave Paul's life meaning. Apart from Him, life held no meaning or purpose. Death, therefore, did not equal loss but gain. He knew that death was not final. Rather, it was an extension of his marching orders as a soldier in the army of the Lord. The life he knew in Christ would only become more magnificent through death. Conversely, if Paul's life was spared, he viewed it as an invitation to do more fruitful work for the kingdom. His only interest in being released from jail was that it would allow him to continue his ministry. He could preach the Gospel a while longer. He could continue to encourage the churches that had become so dear to him. Through life, he could continue to live and do more for Christ.

For years, Paul had been working in the trenches as a missionary—spreading the Gospel and encouraging and guiding the faithful. His hard work was just beginning to show results. Like a farmer who has been tending to trees hoping they will bear fruit, Paul is longing to see evidence of the harvest. He desires to stay because there is so much to be done. The two options the apostle faced did cause some divided feelings, which he expressed in verse 23. Understandably, Paul was pulled between his two options. Not that he viewed either as negative. Instead, in his heart, he longed to be with Christ. His was not a morbid desire, however. Paul probably envisioned a life with Christ too wonderful for the human spirit to totally conceive.

On the other hand, he wanted to be of service to his fellow Christians. He viewed the

continuance of life as being necessary only for the sake of the Philippians (v. 24). Paul was willing for his life to be used in whatever way the Lord deemed necessary. The Philippians were openly proud of Paul, whom they, in a sense, regarded as their own special apostle. Paul lovingly reminded them that Christ, not he, must remain the subject of their boasting. If he was to return to them, they should rejoice in the works of Jesus Christ, not himself. Paul's ability to have hope, even in the most hopeless of circumstances, came from his own experience of being granted new life after his former life had passed on. The boldness he possessed came from his certainty that Christ would be honored by him, whether through his life or his death.

Search the Scriptures

1. For what motives were some preaching the Gospel (Philippians 1:15–17)?
2. Why were motives unimportant in preaching the Gospel (v. 18)?
3. For what reason did Paul want to remain alive (v. 25)?
4. Of what benefit would his continued life be to the Philippians (v. 26)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Paul reached a high spiritual point that caused him to rejoice, whether the outcome of his trial meant life or death. How did he reach such a point of spiritual maturity?
2. Why were some of the Christians strengthened by Paul's imprisonment? Why did they not become fearful that the same thing might happen to them?

Liberating Lesson

Every Christian professes belief in eternal life. Yet, very often, when we think of death, we get scared at the uncertainty of our fate. Perhaps this is because we do not feel certain about our salvation. Some may doubt Christ's

promise. Our enslaved ancestors sang often of heaven—of the streets paved with gold, the pearly gates, where the Sabbath would have no end. They longed for the day when “trouble will be no more,” and every person would live in freedom and equality. Perhaps because there has been a general improvement in our social and economic standing, many of us now appear to place more value on life on earth than eternal life. No matter what attainments life holds, it can never compare to the future glory of life with Christ Jesus. As Christians, we must rejoice in our assurance of eternal life and leave the matter of when we will go to heaven in the hands of God.

Application for Activation

If you were told today that you may not live much longer, what preparation would you make to ensure that Christ would be glorified through your experience of passing from life to death?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Philippians 1:15–26

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Paul’s imprisonment has yielded positive results: a) the Gospel is being made known all over the region including the official residence of the governor; b) many of the brothers are now preaching the Good News with boldness. However, Paul separates these preachers into two groups according to their motives. The first group, he says, preaches out of a wrong motive “of envy and strife.” This group is prompted by “envy” (Gk. *phthonos*, **FT**THON-os), meaning jealousy or ill will, and “strife” (Gk. *eris*, **ER**-is), meaning rivalry, or wrangling or contention. Paul goes on to illustrate in verse 16 how this group’s preaching is motivated by evil: They preach Christ out of contention, not sincerely, not with a clean motive, but rather with an ulterior motive—“to add affliction to my bonds.” The word “contention” translates to the Greek *eritheia* (er-ith-I-ah), which means, in simple terms, selfishness or a desire to put oneself forward. The word translated to mean “affliction” here is the Greek *thlipsis* (**TH**LIP-sis). It can mean “burdened” (2 Corinthians 8:13), “affliction” (Mark 4:17; 13:19; Acts 7:10–11; 2 Corinthians 2:4; 4:17; 6:4), “tribulation” (Matthew 13:21; 24:21, 29; Mark 13:24; John 16:33; Acts 14:22), “persecution” (Acts 11:19), and “trouble” (1 Corinthians 7:28).

Who were these men who were preaching out of contention and selfish ambition with the intention of adding to Paul’s burden? Paul does not seem as much concerned with these people and their evil plans as he was about the positive result of their preaching, as we shall see in Philippians 1:18. He does not intend to

occupy himself or boggle his audience's mind with negativity. He leaves us with no answer. However, scholars have advanced a number of proposals as to who these people were. Certain preachers in Rome had attained some prominence before Paul's arrival. His presence in Rome and the spreading of his fame and the Gospel throughout the region were beginning to affect their prestige (vv. 13–14). The preachers' names seem to have been relegated to the background—not mentioned as often as before the apostle's arrival. Hence, they became envious and contentious; thus, their motive for preaching the Gospel was affected. Bear in mind that they were preaching the true Gospel with positive results, but their intentions and motives were bad. This was a source of concern for Paul, who didn't want the Philippian Christians to lose sight of the Gospel. Later in this book, Paul exhorts the Philippians to be one in the mind of Christ, not putting oneself forward or being selfish (Philippians 2:3). Similarly, James denounces selfishness or self-promoting "in your hearts" (James 3:14). The second group Paul refers to preached out "of good will" (Philippians 1:15b) and "love." This is evident from the phrase, "knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel" (v. 17). This group was motivated by love for Paul and the Gospel, which he proclaimed. These people did not feel indignant about Paul because of his fame that was spreading around the region. Unlike the former group, their focus was not on themselves. They heralded Christ, out of love for Him and the Gospel, and out of concern for Paul and his tribulation. Paul prayed for them to have this type of love: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (1:9, KJV). The clause in verse 17, "knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel," means that they are also motivated by the fact that Paul has been "set" (Gk. *keimai*, **KI**-mahee), i.e., destined or

appointed. This refers either to the trial he is about to face for the sake of the Gospel or that his call or ministry is for the "defence" (Gk. *apologia*, ap-ol-og-EE-ah) of the Gospel for which he was imprisoned.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Rather than moaning over the selfishly motivated preaching of the first group aimed at increasing Paul's burden and suffering and rather than dwelling in self-pity and attracting sympathy for such unchristian behavior toward him, Paul focused on the result of their preaching. Here he says, "What then?" or "That doesn't matter" (NLT). It is another way of saying that what matters is the outcome of their preaching, which turned out to be positive. Whether they were preaching to hurt him is not the main concern. The most important concern is advancing the Gospel. This is clear from the statement, "Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached." What matters to Paul is not what the people are doing to him but rather what they are doing for the Gospel. From here, we can learn one truth: The Lord will work out His desired purpose through the Gospel without respect to how it is preached or the motive of the preachers. To Paul, it did not matter. What mattered is that in "every way"—whether in pretence, as by those with selfish motives, or "in truth" as by those who preach with a sincere heart to glorify the Lord—"Christ is preached." This is true today, too. "Pretence" (Gk. *prophasis*, **PROF**-as-is), is the same word used to describe the prayers of the scribes (Mark 12:40; also Acts 27:30): an outward show, cloak, or pretext. It is the opposite of sincerity. Regardless of the outward insincere showing in preaching, in verse 18, Paul expresses his joy found in the

accompanying furtherance of the Gospel: “I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

In this section, Paul expresses his confidence in the prayer of the brethren and optimism that he would be set free. This also makes him rejoice. The Greek preposition “for” (Gk. *gar*, *gar*) connects the preceding statement with the assurance of his deliverance. Paul’s use of *eido* (I-do) means to know, to see, to perceive with the eyes or by any of the senses. It has the sense of certainty and confidence that all will turn out well for him in the end (Romans 8:28). The result will be his deliverance. Paul’s expressed knowledge here does not mean he had information of his possible deliverance but rather that he had a personal conviction that, through the prayers of the people and the work of the Holy Spirit, he would be set free from prison. However, some other scholars regard this as Paul’s confidence in ultimate salvation. Scholar Gerald Hawthorne observes the direct similarity in Greek construction here: “This will turn out for my deliverance” (Philippians 1:19, RSV) with Job’s statement (Philippians: Word Biblical Commentary, 39; Job 13:16, Septuagint, LXX). Paul probably sees his situation as similar to Job’s, and because Job was vindicated, Paul is convinced that he would be saved and vindicated as well. Hence, he says, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation” (Philippians 1:19). Although Paul uses “salvation” in the eschatological sense of being saved at the last day, his use here of “salvation” (Gk. *soteria*, so-tay-REE-ah) refers to a possible immediate release from the Roman jail. Trusting the faithfulness of God, exemplified by God’s deliverance of Job, coupled with the prayers of the saints and the working of the Holy Spirit, Paul is persuaded that he would be set free.

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

This conviction is expressed in his “earnest expectation and ... hope” based on the confidence he has in Christ. He has two convictions. The first is that whatever happens, he would not be ashamed. The Spirit will not let him down. Writing to the Romans, Paul says he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16, see also Acts 5:41). The idea here is that although he is looking forward to his possible release from prison, the Spirit will not allow him an “easy way” out of his misery—by denying Christ, for example. The second conviction, contrary to the first, is that he would wax bold in proclaiming the Gospel, as he has always done, but more so now. The meaning is clear—“Christ shall be magnified” in Paul. This will happen in Paul’s “body” (Gk. *soma*, SO-mah), which means his entire personality (v. 20). Paul will continue to preach the Gospel and endure hardship, “whether it be by life,” if he is released from prison, “or by death,” if he is executed. His goal is that Christ would be magnified through it all. In either circumstance, he would remain faithful to the end so that Christ’s name would be lifted. This is a show of courage, deeply resolute conviction, and resignation to the service of the Lord Jesus.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Paul’s conviction and courage are demonstrated in his total resignation to whatever comes his way as expressed in verses 21–23. The use of the phrase “for to me” (Gk.

gar emoi, *gar em-OY*) is purposely put here for emphasis—to draw our attention to Paul’s personal conviction regarding life and death. Paul gives new meaning to both life and death. To him “living is Christ,” which means, among other interpretations, “life means Christ.” The essence of living is embodied in Christ Jesus; the fulfillment of life is only to be found in Christ. Paul’s very existence is in Christ—whatever he does is inspired through his resolute relationship with Christ and for Him. To Paul, life would be meaningless without Christ, to whom Paul owes his existence (Romans 14:7–9). He dedicates his whole being to Christ and His cause, to love and obey Him in everything and at all times, and to trust Him in all circumstances. His resolution to live for Christ does not mean a life free from problems and difficulties. Instead, it means living for Christ and preaching the Gospel in spite of problems and difficulties. These problems included imprisonment (Philippians 1:7, 13, 16), afflictions (1:16; 4:14), suffering (1:29; 3:10), struggles (1:30), and all types of tribulation (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). It is a resolution to follow Jesus with no turning back. Paul’s life and ministry were characterized by unimaginable suffering, as we can see from these and other accounts of his life.

On the one hand, for Paul to go on living means leading a dedicated and fruitful life for Christ, (Philippians 1:21a, 22a); on the other hand, for Paul “to die is gain” (v. 21b). He knows that death means an immediate experience of the presence of Christ. Paul is so engrossed in the Gospel and in the reality of eternity that living means working and living for Christ. Dying is even more profitable because he would be with his Lord forever. This should be the hope of every believer. Paul is so confident of the reality of heaven and the assurance of the Resurrection that he says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

This assurance is found in the fact of Christ’s own resurrection, the first fruit of them that slept (v. 20). Here, Paul is reiterating his total resignation to the Lord. Whatever comes his way, whether death or release from prison, he has turned his life and will over to that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Paul also desires to remain alive in the flesh for the Philippians’ sake. His love for the church is so strong, and he knows that they would definitely need him, that he desires “to abide in the flesh” even though this meant he would face more persecution and suffering. It would also mean more “fruit” (Philippians 1:22) and “honor” (v. 20, NLT) for the Lord. He never allowed his subjective dream to override his objective desire. Rather, he places the needs of others above his own desires. In verse 24, the use of the particle, “nevertheless” (Gk. *de*, *deh*)—which can be translated as moreover—shows Paul’s consideration of others, this time the members of the Philippian church, above his own needs and wishes. Why does he prefer to remain in the flesh for their sake? The answer can be found in Philippians 3:1–3, 19, and 4:2, where Paul writes about needs and problems facing the church. To Paul, the need to address these problems and offer further pastoral care to the believers in Philippi weighs heavier than his own desires.

This self-denial is further expressed in 1:25–26. Here, Paul expresses his confidence for his release as he writes, “Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all” (v. 25). Paul speaks with absolute

assurance that he would be released from prison. His release would only be useful for “your furtherance and joy of faith,” that is, for their spiritual growth, which produces joy. “Your furtherance” (Gk. *prokope*, prok-op-AY) or “progress,” means spiritual growth: in love (1:9), in knowledge (1:9), in fruitfulness (1:11), and in obedience (2:12). Such growth will give them joy in their worship and relationship with the Lord, in the faith. His release would also increase their rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf. Paul’s presence with them would increase their dedication to the Lord. They would realize God’s grace working through Paul’s vindication from prison. In Philippians 1:26, the phrase “my coming to you again” implies that Paul visited the church before (Acts 16:11–40; 20:5–6; 2 Corinthians 8:1–5). According to scholars Trent Butler and Merrill Unger, Paul’s wish was granted: He was released and re-visited the church in Philippi during his third missionary journey (Butler, 1082; Unger, 968-977).

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Say It Correctly

Philippians. fi-LIP-ee-uhnz.
Praetorian. pray-TOR-ee-uhn.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Praising God in Word and Life
(Psalm 119:169–176)

TUESDAY

Giving Glory to God
(Matthew 5:13–16)

WEDNESDAY

Making the Word Fully Known
(Colossians 1:21–29)

THURSDAY

Sharing in the Gospel
(Philippians 1:1–7)

FRIDAY

Speaking the Word with Boldness
(Philippians 1:8–14)

SATURDAY

Toiling to Proclaim the Gospel
(1 Thessalonians 2:1–11)

SUNDAY

Proclaiming Christ in Every Way
(Philippians 1:15–26)