

Weekly reading
guide to help
grow our
understanding of
what it means to
become complete
disciples of Jesus.

Summer 2021

Summer Reading

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Philippians



FBC Clinton

Summer Reading, 2021

Friend:

If you're reading this you've decided to engage in First Baptist, Clinton's "Summer Reading" and I'm glad.

It's my hope and prayer as you listen to messages on Sunday morning (preached from the recommended "Summer Reading" for the following week) and continue to search, pray, seek God, and work to change, you'll find more, lasting, and joyous growth in your relationship with our Living Lord Jesus.

I know what I'm asking is out-of-the-ordinary. But we are not living in ordinary times! And the Church is at a crisis point. There is no longer a discernible difference in the moral beliefs or the external behaviors of people who call themselves "Christians" and those who consider themselves irreligious. What does that mean? It means you are as likely to be cussed at by a deacon as by a pagan. It means you're as likely to catch a born-again believer looking at porn as you are a person who claims no faith. It means people claiming Jesus are just as likely to cheat on their taxes, steal from their workplace, cut corners on a project, and abuse their children as people who say, "God is not real."

Brothers and Sisters: this sort of "church" is not acceptable for this shepherd. No, I don't want a church filled with SNL's "Church Lady" or prudish moralists who are only concerned with dotting the "i"s and crossing the "t"s of proper behavior. Jesus desires to change us, inside and out.

Summer Reading is only a first step in a process of learning to see and then do what Jesus himself did. I'm on this journey myself.

We've been summoned to it by God himself. We've been gifted it by the Lord Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection. And we've been enabled to live it by the Holy Spirit within us. We are without excuse.

And now, you have an opportunity to choose to move beyond the oxymoronic Sunday only Christianity. Will you? Peter encourages us to "Work hard" at this sort of life (2 Peter 1:5). By God's help, I will.

Thank you for joining me.

Summer Reading List

Needed: A Bible, a pen/pencil and a notebook (or a digital means to record your thoughts)

Why? To help your life find its center, to enable you through encouragement and deep wisdom, to live the life God intends you to live.

How? Slowly. Only read one chapter a day.

1. Slowly read the chapter in the morning.
2. When an image grabs your attention or a "light" goes on or you go, "What?!" **Stop.**
3. Write down that thought word-for-word. If it's a verse or a paragraph, write it down. Before you read anymore.

4. Then, **pray**. Ask God, “**Lord, help me to _____.**” The blank will be determined by the idea that caught you. If it were a **question**, something that puzzled you, ask God to help you **understand** it. If it were a **truth**, ask God to help you live into it. If it were something joyous and revealing, ask God to help you to live your life in the light of that truth.

5. Repeat this process until you finish the chapter.

To fully saturate your mind with God’s word to you: read the same chapter again at mid-day. This time a different truth may present itself. If it does, just like before, write it down, exactly as it appears in the text. And then pray a similar prayer, “Spirit, help me to _____.”

Allow the words, the truths presented to steep in your mind. For the afternoon.

In the evening, **work through the questions** for that day. Yep, in the same chapter.

Keep reading. Keep writing. Keep praying. Watch what God does!

I’m not presenting you with something new. This practice has been helpful to God’s people from the beginning of God’s people (Joshua 1)

Questions for Philippians:

These questions/ideas are intended to be used alongside your reading in Philippians (one chapter a day this week). **They are not intended to replace what you discover as you read (slowly) each day.** If time doesn't allow, skip this latter part (these questions). Whatever you do, don't NOT read Philippians this week 😊.

Overview: Philippians is written near the end of Paul's life. The church at Philippi is near and dear to him. Almost as soon as Paul arrived at Philippi, a wealthy woman named Lydia chose to follow Jesus and proceeded to host the church in her home (Acts 16). For the sake of the Gospel, Paul and Silas are publicly humiliated and jailed in Philippi. Unfortunately, neither Lydia's, Paul's, nor Silas' selflessness was contagious.

Paul writes this letter from Rome (see 1:13; 4:22) where he is imprisoned (1:7) for his trust in Jesus. The chief problem in the church at Philippi seems centered on two women whose disagreements/pride have caused enormous dissension in the church (4:2). Have no doubt: the biggest "sins" most churches deal with are not large-scale scandals or risqué, headline-grabbing problems with money or sex. More often, the problems involve seemingly small, selfish decisions by individuals who want their way even in the church. Philippians is a brief, brilliantly composed appeal to these two women (and the rest of the congregation) to submit themselves, their desires and even needs (2:5-11; 3:7-11) and serve others (2:17-18; 19-24; 25-30) to the greater need of the Church (1:27).

- Do you have someone in your life like these Philippian friends (for whom you “thank ... God every time [you] remember” (v. 3)?
 - Who is it?

Action Step: Make a way today to tell that person you are grateful for them (text, call, write a note, send a flower, etc.).

- Is there someone in your life that you will pray vv. 9-11 for (someone who needs their love for Jesus to “grow more and more”)? Who is it?

Action Step: Pray v. 9 for them now.

- Is there someone in your life that needs help to **discern the difference between good and bad**? Or needs the will to choose the good? Who is it?

Action Step: Pray v. 10 for them.

In vv. 21-25 Paul is convinced God wants him to "remain in the body," serving Him on earth so that he can encourage others to serve the Lord as well.

- In what way(s) can YOUR presence in someone's life cause THEIR joy in Christ (v. 25) to overflow?

Our church's need for unity is preceded/previewed by the first church's need for unity (see v. 27; see also John 17:11, 20-23). In Paul's case, one of the unifiers was their collaborative suffering (v. 30).

- What might be something that would help (y)our church unify?
[**IDEAS:** missions, serving, need, common struggles, etc.] Write it here: _____
- Why might that be a unifier?

Read Chapter 2

Day 2

- Is there unity in this body? How can you pursue unity?
- What role does humility play in unity?

This chapter contains some of the most astonishing language in all the New Testament. It certainly would have been shocking to his first audience: “God... gave up his place;” “God... made himself nothing” (v. 7)? “God... humbled himself” (v. 8)?

- Is this language still shocking? Why or why not?

- Knowing that the purpose of this letter is unity, how might the example of Jesus (vv. 6-11) help stubborn, proud church members?

- Vv. 12-13 contain two great truths about our growth in Christlikeness. First, we will not grow on our own. Only God can do that in us. Second, God will not grow us if we will not “keep on working.” What is one way God has changed you that you know was an “only God” move? (forgave an ex or relative, landed that job, gave you a heart for that people-group, etc.)
 - How are you, with God’s help, “working to complete your salvation” these days?

Action Step: Timothy and Epaphroditus (vv. 19-30) are held up as examples (like Jesus, earlier) of selfless service. If you were to name someone who serves selflessly, who would it be? _____

Let that person know you appreciate them today (text, email, send a card, go tell them).

Selfishness always wreaks havoc in/to community. When we do what we want (v. 19) instead of considering others' needs, when we consider ourselves better (read, "more important") than others, we create opportunities for the enemy of our souls to move us like pawns on his board (see S. Peter's insistence that he's better than the other disciples [Mt. 26:33] and Jesus' interpretation of it [Luke 22:31ff] for how the enemy uses pride in the best of people; could it be that Peter's prideful declaration sowed such bitter seed that it became the reason he was not the eventual "leader" of the Jerusalem church?)

Paul spends the first verses of this chapter "bragging" on himself only to call all of his credentials "nothing" (v. 7) and "worthless trash" (v. 8) compared to Jesus.

(vv. 1-5)

- In what/whom are you placing confidence? _____
- If you were to lose politics, sports, your job, your good, "church-goer" reputation, your entire investment portfolio, your _____?-- would you be lost? _____ Would it leave you feeling uncertain or empty? If the answer is "yes," that thing may be an idol in your life. Recommit yourself right now to letting God define who you are (v. 7). Commit yourself to trust in God and God alone. Write this prayer of commitment/recommitment here:

- What are you tempted to take pride in?
 - How might you (like the old apostle) guard yourself against ego-driven actions?

Read Chapter 4

Day 4

(vv. 6-7) Prayer and thanksgiving are weapons against anxiety and catalysts to inner peace.

Philippians 4:6-7 is the most-often highlighted portion of Kindle's most popularly downloaded book (the Bible). That fact reveals that a lot of people who trust the Bible still struggle with anxiety. And yet, in vv. 8-9 (often not connected to the previous verses) Paul gives a gloriously practical prescription for worry.

Action Step: Take a few moments now and write down “things” that are good, honorable, excellent, true, praiseworthy, pure, right, and beautiful (vv. 8).

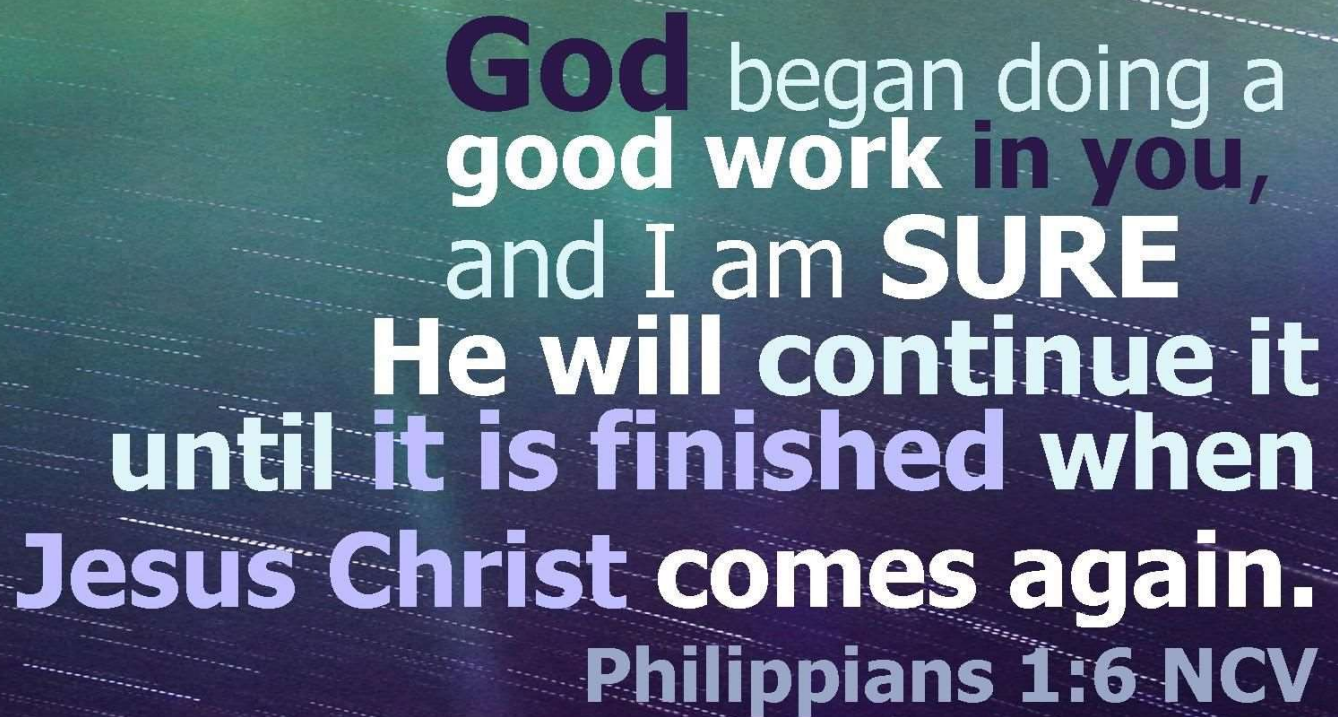
Now, **do** what Paul instructed: “think about” (i.e., **meditate on**) these things instead of those other things.

IDEA: some of the best “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy” things in the world are found in scripture—meditate on it (in fact—how about v. 13)!

*Other verses to “think about” (**meditate on**)—Psalm 27:1; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 55:22; Psalm 23:1; John 3:30; Ephesians 4:1-3; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-23; James 1:19-21; 4:7). If you need/want others, email bharwell@clintonfbc.us and ask.

Truth from Hunter B: Why does it matter what we think about?

Because “if you reflect on it, you’ll reflect it” in your life. As Proverbs 4:23 says, “More than anything you guard, protect your mind, for life flows from it,” (CEB). Life or even death, it seems! That’s why Colossians 3:2 also advises us to set our minds on things above. What you think about matters.



God began doing a
good work in you,
and I am **SURE**
He will continue it
until it is finished when
Jesus Christ comes again.
Philippians 1:6 NCV



**Don't worry about anything;
instead, pray about everything.
Tell God what you need, and
thank him for all he has done.
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.**

Philippians 4:6-7 NLT