



# **Philippians & Colossians DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to ‘follow’ Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids’** environments, **men’s/women’s** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

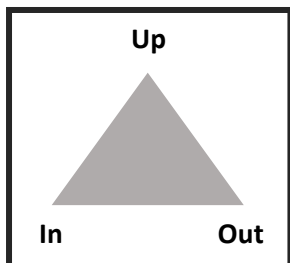
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

If I had a pound for every time I heard a parent say to a child, “I don’t like your attitude”, I’d be a wealthy man! Attitude is a big deal and it makes a big difference in life. Paul told the Philippian church that their attitude should be like that of Christ Jesus (2:5).

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is in some ways unique. Most of Paul’s letters include some correction, either in terms of doctrine or practice. The Galatians had fallen into a righteousness-by-works doctrine. The Corinthians had issues like sexual sin, factions, chaos in their worship, and some who denied the resurrection. The Romans had tensions between Jews and Gentiles. The Thessalonians had questions about Jesus’ return which left them confused and losing heart. However, the Philippians, for the most part, are celebrated by Paul. They’re getting lots of things right. Over and over, Paul encourages them, saying, “Hey, keep at it. Stay faithful.” But there is still room for improvement. Their attitude is not yet perfected.

There was considerable persecution at Philippi and much to discourage this church. It was actually a city created for retired soldiers. Many important former generals of Rome lived there – powerful men, faithful to Rome, with time and means. When Paul was in Philippi in Acts 16, he was arrested with Silas, flogged, and put in chains. But there, in prison, they worshipped, and an earthquake flung the prison open. The jailor was amazed that Paul and Silas stayed put. That jailor and his household received the gospel and were baptised. (Out of that story I found Jesus as well, so happy days.)

Paul had strong affections for the Christians at Philippi. He says to them, “Make my joy complete by being like-minded, by doing everything without selfishness, by loving one another. Keep going as you have been.” If I could sum up Philippians in one thought it would be this: keep working and growing in the direction God has put in place. God is completing His work in you. You’re not done yet, but you’re getting there.

This is such a great wee epistle to fill you with joy. So, let’s get our sleeves rolled up. Grab your Bible, journal, pen and a cuppa.

Love and prayers,  
Phil

## Read

# Philippians 1

## Live

I am writing to you today with the same motive as Paul writing from prison. He writes to confirm their faith, encourage them to walk worthy of the gospel of Christ, caution them against false teachers, and express gratitude for their love towards him. This is the only epistle written by Paul that has no condemnation but rather full commendation and loads of affection. It's a bit like a text message from a friend saying, "Hey you, you're doing great. Love and prayers!"

I love verse 1. Paul speaks of both his and Timothy's positions as servants of Jesus Christ. He could have easily said, "I, Paul, a seasoned leader in the Christian faith and Timothy, my prodigy." But instead of giving an impressive spiritual resumé, Paul acknowledged that he and Timothy were co-servants working in God's kingdom. It should encourage every one of us to know that there is no seniority in the kingdom of God. Christian giants with years of service have no more access to the throne of God than the new-born babe in Christ. God's army is looking for foot soldiers, not generals.

Paul lived his life to exalt Christ in everything he did, as verse 20 explains: *"that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."* The great goal of the Christian life is to glorify God by everything we are and do. To glorify God means, in common language, to make God look good, as He truly is. We may think, Christ is the Almighty God, Creator of the universe. How can I possibly exalt or glorify Him? I sometimes think of how a distant star, which may be more brilliant than our own sun, is, to the human eye, a dim speck in the night sky. To many in this world, Christ is like that. He is the very splendour of God, brighter than a million suns but the world doesn't see Him that way. The believer is to be a telescope bringing the truth about Christ into view for the unbeliever.

## Pray

Father, I thank You for my fellow believers, my friends, colleagues, and all my family. You declare that it is not good for man to be alone, and how true are Your words. Help me today to phone a friend, write a note or have a coffee and tell someone I really appreciate them. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

Paul is encouraging these believers to embrace unity, stay humble, and follow Jesus, not the world. Our behaviour will express our true heart. It's a bit like an exhaust on a car; the emissions reflect the fuel that goes in. What is your fuel? Remember, rubbish in, rubbish out. The opposite is true also.

Today we find what some scholars suggest is the oldest surviving piece of writing on Jesus. Paul introduces it by saying, "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*". We should mimic Him and specifically His attitude. In other words, we need to change our perspective and viewpoint. Even if we are doing things well, there is room to be more like Christ. He is the benchmark we aim for. He is the goal and model we should be seeking to emulate. Our attitude plays a big part of that.

So, what is Jesus' attitude? Well, as we can see, it's humility and servanthood. He made Himself nothing. He "*emptied*" Himself. This word comes from the Greek word meaning 'to pour'. He pours Himself out. He gives Himself and His authority away. There are two words for servant. One is *diakonos* (from which we get the word 'deacon') – an administrator, server or attendant. Then there's *doulos* – a bondservant, slave, one without any authority. Jesus became a *doulos*. He is King of Heaven but is now in the form of a human. Fully divine, but not clinging to it. Fully human, He serves us by obeying even death. "*The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give Himself as a ransom.*" Jesus came to serve us through death. His death means something, it accomplishes something for us. He willingly chose to leave behind His status as the immortal, almighty God, and be put to death to buy us back from death. He died that we might live. As death came through Adam, so life comes through Jesus.

## Pray

Father, how I need You today. Please help me by Your Holy Spirit to keep my focus on You. I want to live for You more and I want to align myself to Your will. I am exhorted in this chapter to have the mind of Christ. This is quite a challenge but nonetheless possible or You wouldn't have placed it in Your Word. This fills me with hope today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# Philippians 3

## Live

Paul continues his exhortations; he even mildly apologises for going on. He stresses the importance of living for Christ. Can I say the same to you, my readers today? There's nothing more fulfilling in life and more rewarding in death than following the principles set out in Scripture.

This chapter has to be one of the most beautiful appeals to induce believers to devote themselves in service to their Redeemer. Our Saviour came to suffer for our sins. His entire ministry was marked by misunderstanding, opposition, betrayal, and death. While we can never enter into His sufferings in the same way that He suffered on the cross, there is a sense in which we can never be like Him if we do not go through suffering and learn to entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. Hebrews 5:8 makes the startling statement that *"Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered."* It does not mean that Jesus was disobedient and had to learn to be obedient; it means that He had never experienced the test of obedience until He suffered. His suffering for our sins on the cross was the ultimate test of His submission to the will of the Father. If we are to be like Him, we must also learn to obey God through suffering.

Unlike Jesus, we have the powerful force of indwelling sin to contend with. God uses suffering to burn off the dross and purify us. But we have to cooperate with Him by humbling ourselves under His mighty hand when we go through trials, trusting His sovereignty over our suffering and casting all our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:6-11). I have included some of Paul's words in our prayer today.

## Pray

Father, I am excited about the apostle Paul's writing. May I be so bold as to make it my prayer today? *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* In Jesus' name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# Philippians 4

## Live

I love this chapter as Paul heaps loving title after loving title to express his affection for the church at Philippi.

What better exhortation could I give you today than this, *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

What words of joy are in our hearts as we read this little epistle? It fills our hearts with gratitude for all the friends both here on earth at present and those at home with the Lord, having gone on before, those who have filled our lives with joy and beautiful memories. Those departed friends have helped connect my soul to the eternal, and for that I give eternal thanks.

Joy is expressed in a variety of styles and circumstances. Paul couldn't care less whether joy is with hands raised or face pressed against the ground. It matters not whether it is to the rhythm of a fast-paced worship song or in solemn silence with streaming tears. What concerns Paul, and must concern us, is the reason for our joy. Paul is declaring that real joy can only be found in Jesus. He is our joy. As well as Jesus being ours, Scripture confirms over and over that we are His, regardless of whether the sky is clear and sunny or threatening with an approaching dark cloud. That is why we can rejoice always, at all times, in every circumstance, no matter the pain or pleasure. Our joy is constant not because our circumstances are, but because Jesus is. Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Maybe our lack of strength at times is because we are avoiding the source of all joy!

## Pray

Father, I thank You that You loved me when I was lost and in my sin. Before my conception and even before the foundations of this old earth were laid, You planned me in Christ. I love and bow before You today, You alone. I will not bow to another. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?





## INTRODUCTION TO COLOSSIANS

Penned from a prison cell around AD61, Paul (like other New Testament authors) wrote of the deity of Jesus to combat claims against Him. But these writers also intended to prompt their readers to worship and exult in their great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. C.S. Lewis wrote, "A man can't be always defending the truth; there must be a time to feed on it" [*Reflections on the Psalms*, 7]. With all the attacks against the truth of the gospel, Christians often neglect this point. We can spend much time arguing and debating with sceptics and atheists, forgetting to enjoy and delight in that which we defend.

The Colossian church experienced numerous attacks from false teachers. The exact nature of the Colossian heresy (or heresies) is debated among scholars. The way to combat heresy is not through argument, but by proclaiming Jesus Christ and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection. In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul wrote one of the most profound summaries of who Christ is and what He accomplished. In doing so, he crushed the arguments of the false teachers, and gave the Colossian Christians, and us, even more reason to worship and exalt Jesus Christ as God. In this book, we see Christ in relation to God, creation, and the new creation.

This is a great book. So, Bible, journal, pen, and a cuppa at the ready.  
Let's go...

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

This chapter kicks off with one of Paul's amazing prayers for the saints to be strengthened and uplifted in their faith. He then runs into the supremacy of Jesus Christ who is the visible representation of the invisible eternal God. Obviously, Jesus is eternal too. He has always existed, with no beginning or end. God created the entire universe – all matter, substance, and form, all time, thought, and essence, all by and through Christ who is supreme. He is the highest and most precious transcendent Being through it all, and through us too. Consider that Christ made all things and He enables you and me to trust and have faith in Him. He is to be worshipped and He is the primary purpose for anything a church is to focus on and do. The false teachers in Colossae taught that something in addition to Christ was required for salvation. Paul assured them that Christ was sufficient.

Paul says in verse 15 that Christ is the image of the invisible God. Paul is not thinking here of Christ's physical appearance, but of His character and nature. Genesis 1 says God made man in His image, to reflect His character and nature to the world, but sin marred God's intentions for man. No one is able to perfectly reveal God but when God's Son entered the world, He perfectly revealed God's character and glory. N.T. Wright says, "*Jesus fulfils the purposes which God had marked out both for himself and for humanity.*"

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. This prevents us from making God into our image. We tend to fashion God after our own thoughts and desires. We try to squeeze Him into a mould and project onto Him something He is not. Jesus keeps our view of God in check. Let's praise Him.

**Pray**

Father, thank You today that the song emanating from heaven towards me is "There is now, and forevermore, no condemnation for you." To trust in You, Lord Jesus, to boast in the gift of Your righteousness, rest in the constancy of Your love, wake up each day to Your endless mercies, hear You sing to me in the gospel, is to feel the stranglehold of shame lose its grip over my heart. Hallelujah, I no longer fear the gaze of God because of the grace of God. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

One thing that becomes more and more clear as we move through the letter to the Colossians is Paul's deep love for them and his genuine concern for their situation. This chapter begins the same way chapter 1 ends, with Paul expressing his ongoing struggle on behalf of the Colossians. As a faithful minister who loves people and loves the gospel, Paul is concerned that the Colossians are being tempted to minimise the supremacy of Christ. He longs to see them remain faithful. He expresses his deep struggle for them and his desire to see them stand strong so they won't be led astray by false teaching. His admonition in this chapter is the same as it has been up to this point, but he states it more clearly here, saying Christ must be central, and if you have received Christ, walk in Him.

As Christ lived, died, and was raised from the dead, we also are symbolically buried and rise to have new life and freedom. We are raised in Him because we have faith and act upon that faith by our trust in Him. Real faith turns into action. If it does not, we are dead in our sins, empty and purposeless, and our sinful nature will have control over us.

We are alive in Christ. God has forgiven our trespasses and sins, removed the damning evidence against us and cancelled our debt. We are now released from the legal demands of the Law by our reconciliation in Him. We are made righteous by His blood. Incredible stuff this, to stand eternally righteous before the God of heaven. Hallelujah! May this encourage us to go with God into the sufferings of friends and family, further into the groans of our own hearts, and into the injustices and brokenness of our communities. All of us have an aversion to pain and suffering. We would all love the Christian life to be an antidote for discomfort and distress, but, just like others, we can get overwhelmed and overtaxed by the sufferings around us.

**Pray**

Father, You'll never lead me into hard places where You're not present. You'll never ask me to do anything all by myself. You'll never leave me or forsake me. You will lead justice to victory, and in Your name all the nations will put their hope. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Paul instructs us that once we accept our new position, our priority in life must be God. We must set our hearts and minds on things above, not on earthly things. Our personal, family, and church priorities must be focused on Christ. God loves you! He chose you to be one of His holy people, so you must clothe yourself in His love and principles. We must realise that others have faults and show them the grace and forgiveness Christ has given us. We are to become His masterpiece and showcase of His goodness and grace.

What is produced? Tender mercies, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. These are virtues that are sealed and empowered by His love for us, which comes from Christ ruling our hearts and His Word indwelling us. This is not a set of ideas we are asked to consider; rather, we are called and must *do* them! What do we get in return? Peace, as Christ dwells in us and uses us in the lives of others through our words, attitudes, and lifestyle.

How do we live a life that honours God? Paul provides specific issues of our lives that we need to put off and things we need to put on. He instructs us to put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature. If we are focused on living our new priorities of serving Jesus, we will no longer need our old priorities, desires, and self-centeredness. The results of sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed which is idolatry are that we will encounter the wrath of God. Paul says that our old ways of living must be thrown away. We are to put off anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying. We must replace these behaviours with the new self, our new identity, for we are being renewed in the knowledge of the image of our Creator. We must seek to let the peace of Christ rule our hearts for His glory.

**Pray**

Father, this portion of Your Word is like an ocean of grace and hope. It intensifies my longing to be a child who loves his Father with such intensity that to hurt You would break my heart. I want to know You better and better as Abba, Father – the most caring, engaged, and loving parent ever. May my behaviour reflect my love for You, Father. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

Paul was an extreme example of multiplying networks, energising and influencing people for the Lord. Being excited about who you are in Christ is an essential aspect of attracting people and motivating them for and in leadership. New Christians bring in most of the new converts because they are excited and energised. Even though new Christians may be less versed in theological matters, they are bringing people in. People who have been Christians for many years tend to lose their excitement, and thus, may rarely bring people into the church. Let's get a fresh excitement!

Notice that Paul doesn't ask for prayer just for himself. He sees himself as part of a ministry team, even while in jail in Rome. Along with Paul are his co-worker Timothy and others, including fellow prisoner Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. Some were well-trained workers able to minister independently; others, Paul was probably training for future ministry. Paul asks for prayer for the whole team.

In verses 5 and 6 Paul speaks to the Colossian believers about their everyday evangelism. I love this. The outsiders Paul is referring to are those who are outside the community of Christian believers. The way we conduct ourselves with non-Christians is important. We need to be wise and loving, and this is why Paul calls for practical wisdom. Sometimes we're so embarrassed by the behaviour of fellow Christians that we bend the other way and remain silent. That isn't the answer, says Paul. Instead, we are to redeem the time. What does that mean? It means to take every *"opportunity"*, a word that carries the idea of favourable time. *"Make the most of"* has the meaning 'to deliver'. Paul tells us to take full advantage of every opportunity we are given. There is powerful advice in verse 6: *"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."*

## Pray

Father, we read in today's chapter, *"See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord."* May that be my final prayer as I conclude this little letter. Help me to be a completer, not a complainer. After all, You are the Author and Finisher of my faith. I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

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