

**FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDIES
(Reading the Bible together)**



1, 2, 3 JOHN & PHILIPPIANS

**SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE
(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)**

1,2 & 3 John and Philippians

Introduction and Lesson 1

Although the writer's name is not found in the three epistles of John, from the days of the early church, John, the disciple of Jesus has been believed to be the writer of these letters. When John wrote his gospel, he said his reason for writing it was "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (Jn.20:31) He tells us in his first epistle, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 Jn.5:13)

Therefore, we can see that one of the reasons we need to study this letter is so that we can be sure of our salvation. But John had another reason for writing this epistle. He wanted to oppose the teaching of false teachers. They denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22), that He is God's Son (2:23), and that He came in the flesh (4:2). There are many false teachers in our time who teach these and other false teachings. John tells us that we need to test them and their teaching (4:1). When we come to chapter 4 we will learn how we can do this. We always need to be alert so that we can recognise false teaching and oppose it.

1 John is a very practical epistle. It teaches us that all those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, will walk in the light; they will obey God; they will love other believers. It is not enough to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ". James warns us that even the demons believe, and tremble (James 2:19). John says, "The man who says "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar" (2:4). The person who has eternal life will obey God's commands.

In order to be certain that we have eternal life, we must test ourselves: Do we believe the right things? Do we do the right things? There is one more test; do we have the right experience in the Holy Spirit? We learn in 3:24 that we can know that Christ lives in us because of the Spirit He gave us. As we study this epistle, we will find these three tests many times - the tests of belief, practice and experience.

God is light (1:5); therefore we, His children, must walk in the light (1:7). God is love (4:16); therefore we must love one another (4:11).

Questions for lesson 1

Memory verse: 1 John 5:13

Day 1 Read the Introduction

1. Give 2 reasons why John wrote his first epistle.

2. Match these verses with the following sentences:
Acts 2:36, Heb.2:17, Heb.1:3

- (a) Jesus is truly man.
- (b) Jesus is truly God's Son.
- (c) Jesus is Christ.

3. What 3 sorts of tests do we find many times in 1 John?

Day 2 1 John 1:1-4

4. In these verses John is writing about his experience with the Lord Jesus. In what ways had he known Jesus?

5. What things can you learn about Jesus from these verses?

6. What were John's desires for those to whom he wrote?

Day 3 1 John 1:5-7

7. What do you think John means when he says, "God is light"?

8. (a) Who cannot have fellowship with God?

(b) Give examples of sins in your life which could cause you to walk in darkness.

9. (a) What are the 2 results of walking in the light?

(b) Are you walking in the light today and do you have these results in your life?

Day 4 1 John 1:8-10

10. What are the 4 results of our saying, "I don't have any sin"?

11. (a) If we have sinned, what must we do?

(b) What will happen if we do this?

12. Examine your heart and see if there is any sin hidden there. Then confess that sin to God.

Day 5 1 John 2:1-2

13. What was John's desire?

14. What is an advocate, and what is his work?

15. (a) What has Jesus Christ done for us in the past?

(b) What does He do for us in the present?

(c) What word of comfort for yourself do you find here today?

Day 6 1 John 2:3-6

16. (a) What proves that we know God?

(b) What proves that we do not know God?

17. From v.3 & 5, write 3 results of obeying God's commands.

18. Read v.6 and give examples of things we will do if we walk as Jesus walked.

Day 7 1 John 2:7-11

19. What command is John writing about in v.7-8? (Jn.13:34)

20. (a) Who is walking in darkness?

(b) Who is walking in the light?

(c) What does darkness do to us?

21. Is there the darkness of hatred in you? Carefully read again chp. 1:5-10 and ask God to forgive and to give you His light.

Lesson 2

1 John 1:1 - 2:11 Light and Darkness

The Word of Life - 1:1-4

John was one of the witnesses of Jesus' earthly life. He had heard him speak, seen Him with his eyes, looked at Him and touched Him. But John also knew that Jesus was not like other men. He knew He was from the beginning. (Read Jn.1:1). Jesus is eternal life who had been with the Father. John calls Him the Word of Life. When we speak words, we reveal our thoughts to other people. Jesus is God's Word, and through Him, God reveals His thoughts and Himself to us. Jesus came to reveal God to us, and also to give us life. He is the Word of life.

John testified that he had known Jesus when He lived on this earth. He also tells us in v.3 that his fellowship with Jesus Christ (and with the Father) was continuing now. Have you known Jesus Christ? Can you testify about knowing Him in the past? What about today? Does your fellowship continue with Him day by day? It's not enough to testify about what Jesus Christ has done for us in the past. We need to know Him and have fellowship with Him today.

Walking in the light - 1:5-7

As he continues his letter, John tells us what we must do to have this fellowship. When he writes, "God is light," what is he teaching us about God's character? Light is pure, it reveals what is hidden, it destroys darkness, it shows us the way. Likewise God is pure and holy, He reveals all that is hidden and destroys all that is evil. In His light our way becomes clear. In contrast, the word "darkness" suggests sin, evil, hidden things and death. How can we have fellowship with God who is pure, shining light? We must put away the works of darkness and walk in holiness. We must reveal everything inside ourselves to God. If we walk in darkness we can have no fellowship with God.

When we walk in the light, we not only have fellowship with God, but also with one another. And as we allow God's light to reveal our sin, we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Sin in our lives - 1:8 - 2:2

While John's desire was that his readers not sin, he reminded them that all of us have sin in our lives. If we deny this we are deceiving ourselves and making God out to be a liar.

But if we agree with God and confess our sin, He will forgive us. This is possible because Jesus Christ died to be the sacrifice for our sins (2:2). This verse means that God's anger was against us because of our sin, but Jesus took that anger on Himself and away from us. And now He prays for us in God's presence (2:1).

Obedience - 2:3-11

Sometimes our words and our actions are not in agreement. We say, "I know God" but we do not obey Him. We say, "I live in the light" but we hate our brother. John says that if we do this we are liars and are still in the darkness. Test your life with this practical test - Do you obey God? Do you walk as Jesus did (v.6)? Do you love your Christian brother?

Questions for lesson 2

Memory verse: 1 John 2:9

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 2

1. Can you testify about your fellowship with God and Jesus Christ this last week? (Perhaps about something He spoke to you, or something He did for you.)
2. Why can God forgive our sins?
3. What are the practical tests John gives us in chp.2?

Day 2 1 John 2:12-14

4. Which 3 sorts of people does John write to in these verses?
5. What things does John say about;
(a) The children? (b) the fathers? (c) the young men?
6. Which of these things are true in your life?

Day 3 1 John 2:15-17

7. Which are the 3 things which are from the world and not from God.

8. Which two things are we not able to love at the same time?

9. (a) What do you think the word "world" means in these verses?

(b) Which worldly things tempt you?

Day 4 1 John 2:18-23

10. In what ways did the "antichrists" prove that they were not from God?

11. Who cannot know the Father?

12. (a) How are we able to know the truth? (v.20)

(b) Which Christians are able to know the truth?

Day 5 1 John 2:24-29

13. (a) What must remain in us?

(b) In whom must we remain?

14. Read v.27 and look again at your answer for question 12(b). What can you learn here?

15. What will be the result if we remain in Christ?

Day 6 1 John 3:1-3

16. (a) What are we now?

(b) What will we be in the future?

17. If we believe the promise given in v.2, what will we do?

18. (a) What amazing things do we read about in these verses?

(b) Which of these is the most amazing to you?

Day 7 1 John 3:4-10

19. Why did Jesus Christ appear? Give 2 reasons.

20. What do the following verses tell us about the person who continues to sin?

(a) v.4 (b) v.6 (c)v.8 (d) v.10

21. Copy a verse from this section which gives a test to help us be sure that we are saved.

Lesson 3

1 John 2:12 - 3:10 Warnings and Promises

Children, fathers and young men - 2:12-14

When John uses these words, it is not clear whom he was meaning. Perhaps he was separating people by their ages. But in other places (e.g. 2:1) he calls all his readers "My dear children". So, perhaps when he writes "dear children" he means everyone, and when he says "fathers" he is speaking about the mature people in the church, and when he says "young men" he means those who have not been in Christ for a long time. He says to the children, "Your sins have been forgiven, and you have known the Father." This is true for every believer. The "fathers", however, have been long in the faith and have known Jesus as the One who is from the beginning. The "young men" were in a spiritual battle. Christ defeated Satan in His death and resurrection ("The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" 3:8). Therefore John says, "You have overcome the evil one." v.14 reminds us that those who are strong and overcome Satan are those who have the Word of God living in them.

In your church you have "fathers" and "young men". Is there unity amongst them? Do you young people respect the old men and women because they are mature and have known Christ for a long time? Do you older people support the young ones who are strong in their faith? Without them the church will be very weak. If there is disagreement among you, this does not please God. Let us give fitting honour to one another.

Do not love the world - 2:15-17

When we use the word "world", we mean different things. Because God loved the world (i.e. all the people in the world) He gave His Son. God created the beautiful world in which we live. But in v.15, when John tells us not to love the world there is another meaning to the word. Here "world" means that which is not from the Father (v.16), that which is under Satan's control (5:19), the unsaved world. Jesus taught us that we cannot love two masters. Here John says that we cannot love both the world and the Father.

In v.16-17 we learn what it means to love the world.

1. "The desire of the flesh" refers to the desires we have to satisfy our bodies. God gave us these desires - e.g. if we didn't have the desire for food, we would die of starvation - but if our desires control us we cannot love God. When Eve saw that the fruit was good for food she was overcome by the desire of the flesh.

2. "The desire of the eyes" tells us about our craving for things which we see. Because Eve saw that the fruit was pleasing to the eye she took it. When David saw Bathsheba bathing, he wanted her and then committed adultery with her (2 Sam.11:2-4). When we see things in the world and want them for ourselves, then we easily fall into sin.

3. "Boasting in self" speaks of our wanting to exalt ourselves. Eve saw that the fruit was desirable for gaining wisdom. We commit many sins because of our pride. We boast because of what we have and because of what we do. But this attitude is from the world, not from God.

Are these things found in your life? Do your fleshly desires control you? Are you troubled because you want many things that you see? Are you proud and boastful? These things of the world will choke God's love in our lives. But the one who does God's will lives forever.

Warning against antichrists - 2:18-29

John tells us that the antichrists had separated from the church (v.19), they denied that Jesus is the Christ (v.22) and they were trying to lead the believers astray (v.26). We need to watch that those who leave our churches do not lead others astray by teaching false doctrines.

How can we know if such people's teaching is true or false? John tells us that the teaching we have heard from the beginning (i.e the teaching in the Bible) must remain in us (v.24). We must compare what we hear with what the Bible says. Especially, we must stand firm in our faith in Jesus Christ (v.22-23). If someone comes and says, "I have the anointing of the Spirit and have a special message from God", we can answer, "We also have the Spirit's anointing" (v.20 & 27). The Holy Spirit will never lead us to oppose God's Word. When a teacher denies what is written in the Bible, the Holy Spirit will show this to us if we remain in Him (v.27). There are true and false anointings. If an anointing leads to error, twists the teaching about Christ, or denies the teaching which was from the beginning, that is not a true anointing. A true anointing of the Holy Spirit supports the Bible's teaching and exalts Christ.

Children of God - 3:1-10

Because we have been born of God (2:29 & 3:9), we are now God's children. When Christ returns, we will completely resemble Him. But even now, because we have God's seed remaining in us, and because we live in Him, we cannot continue to sin. To understand what John is teaching us here, we must compare v.6 with 1:8 & 10. We all sin, and until we die we will never completely defeat sin. In this chapter John is not opposing what he wrote in chapter 1. The correct translation of v.6 is "No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." If we are truly God's children we cannot continue willingly to sin. Likewise v.9 says, "No one who is born of God will continue to sin." When we fall into sin, we must confess it and forsake it. God will forgive us. But, if we enjoy sin and willingly continue in it, we must doubt that we are born of God.

In this week's study we find three ways to test our salvation - Do I believe the truth about Jesus Christ? (2:22-23); do I show by what I do that I have been born of God? (3:6-10); do I have the experience of the Holy Spirit in my life? (2:20,27) If, having tested yourself with these questions you doubt that you are saved, confess your sins to God and ask Him to give you a new heart. Then read Prov.28:13 and Lk.11:9-13.

Questions for lesson 3

Memory verse: 1 John 3:2-3

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 3

1. Is there agreement between the young people and the older people in your church? What can you do to improve your unity together?

2. If an anointing of the Holy Spirit is true, what 2 things will it do?

3. Give reasons why a Christian cannot willingly continue to sin.

Day 2 1 John 3:11-15

4. (a) If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, what does that prove?

(b) If we don't love them, what does that prove?

5. In which verses in this section do we find the teaching of Jesus given in the following verses? (a) Matt.5:21-22 (b) John 13:34

6. Examine your heart and see if there is any hatred in it. If there is, confess your sin to God and ask Him to give you His love.

Day 3 1 John 3:16-18

7. (a) How were we able to know the meaning of love?

(b) To understand this more, read Is.53:3-6. What do you learn from this passage?

8. (a) Because of Jesus' example, what ought we to do?

(b) What do you think this means?

9. How can we prove our love is real?

Day 4 1 John 3:19-24

10. According to these verses, what are the two aspects of God's command?

11. What do v.23-24 say about the tests of:
(a) belief? (b) practice? and (c) experience?

12. (a) What proof do we have of Christ's living in us?

(b) Do you have this experience?

Day 5 1 John 4:1-3

13. (a) What command do we find here? (b) Why should we do this?

14. What is the spirit of antichrist?

15. How can we test those who come to us with new teaching? Read again the paragraph in the notes for lesson 3 about "Warnings against antichrists".

Day 6 1 John 4:4-6

16. (a) Who is the One who is in us?

(b) Who is the one who is in the world?

(c) Which of these two is greater?

17. (a) Who listens to "us" i.e. John and the apostles?

(b) What do we know about those who do not listen to the teachings of the apostles in the Bible?

18. Read v.4 again. What message is there here for the person who fears Satan and his spirits?

Day 7 1 John 4:7-12

19. (a) What do we learn in these verses about the person who loves?

(b) What do we learn about the person who does not love?

(c) We have never seen God. How can we prove that we love Him?

20 What is the source of love?

21. What do we learn here about God's love?

Lesson 4

1 John 3:11 - 4:12 Love

Loving one another - 3:11-24

Believers must love one another. In these verses John connects hatred with murder. Not to love is to hate, and hatred is from Satan. The person who is unable to love is without spiritual life and remains in death. True love is not words or a feeling. Just as Jesus Christ showed His love by giving His life for us, so we are to give ourselves for others. We are not saved because we love, but we can be sure we have eternal life because of the love that God has put in our hearts (v.14). Although our hearts sometimes condemn us and we doubt, we need to remember that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything (v.20). When we are obeying and pleasing God, we know that He hears and answers our prayers (v.22).

Testing the spirits - 4:1-6

In John's time the false teachers denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. In our time also there are those who deny what the Bible teaches about Christ. We must not allow such people to teach in our churches. But in our time there are teachers who come bringing other false teaching that was not known in John's time. Some of them "are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world" (v.5). E.g. there are those who say, "What is your problem? If you believe, God will give you whatever you want. He will heal you from all your sickness." But the Bible does not teach like this. God does answer our prayers, but we must ask according to His will (5:14) and we must obey Him and please Him (3:22). When Paul had some sort of sickness, God did not heal him (2 Cor.12:7-9). God promises to give us all we need (Phil.4:19), but not all we want. Those who emphasise the physical benefits gained from Jesus are from the world, not from God.

In the Old Testament we are told about testing those who say they have a message from God. Read Deut.18:20-22. When someone speaks a prophecy in God's name and it is not

fulfilled, we must not accept that person's teaching a second time. Anyone who speaks a lie in God's name is from Satan and not from God.

Because there are two kinds of spirit, we must discern that which comes from God's Spirit and that which comes from Satan. Not all which appears to be spiritual is from God. The Holy Spirit who lives in every believer is greater than Satan and his evil spirits. We overcome him by the Word of God (2:14).

God's love - 4:7-12

By His nature, God is love. How are we able to know this? We see His love revealed in His sending His only Son into the world. Then He placed on Him the punishment for our sins. He did this because He loved you. Consider how great His love is. If we have been born of God and know Him, we in turn must love one another. The people around us cannot see God, but as they see us love one another, His life is revealed in us.

Questions for lesson 4

Memory verse: 1 John 4:4

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 4

1. What is necessary in order that God answer our prayers?
2. Because it is such a big mistake to speak a lie in God's name, what punishment was given in the Law of Moses if a prophet prophesied falsely?
3. Can you give any other examples of false teaching found at this present time?

Day 2 1 John 4:13-18

4. (a) Who lives in God?

(b) How can we know this?
5. (a) Which 2 things cannot live together? (v.18)

(b) Why?

6. What is your reason for obeying God - because you fear His punishment, or because He loves you?

Day 3 1 John 4:19-21

7. From each of these verses give one reason why we must love one another.

8. (a) What is the source of our love?

(b) Compare v.19 with 3:16, 4:9-10 and 4:14 and meditate on the greatness of God's love.

9. (a) Why do you think John keeps repeating the lesson about loving our brother?

(b) Are you obeying this command?

Day 4 1 John 5:1-5

10. How do we reveal our love for God?

11. (a) Who is born of God?
- (b) Who overcomes the world?

12. (a) How can we overcome the world?

(b) Read 2:16 again. What temptation from the world do you need to overcome today?

Day 5 1 John 5:6-12

13. About which 3 witnesses does John write?

14. (a) Where is eternal life to be found?

(b) Who has this life?

(c) What does it mean "to have the Son"?

15. What do these verses teach about those who do not believe?

Day 6 1 John 5:13-17

16. What was John's purpose in writing this epistle?

17. (a) In order to receive what we ask in prayer, what must we do?

(b) Knowing this, how must we pray?

(c) Can you think of some things that are God's will?

18. Can you give an example of a prayer that God did not answer as you wanted? Do you now understand why that was not His will?

Day 7 1 John 5:18-21

19. Like 3:6 & 3:9, v.18 speaks about the habit of sinning. Why does the one born of God not continue to sin?

20. (a) What do we learn about Satan in these verses?

(b) What lesson can you take for yourself from this?

21. What is John's last command?

Lesson 5

1 John 4:13 - 5:22

Faith and Obedience

Living in God - 4:13-18

In these verses we are given the promise that if anyone believes that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. We are sure that God lives in us because we have the witness of His Spirit in us. God is love and if He lives in us, we will live in love. If we live in

love, we do not fear the day of judgment (v.17). When we love God and He lives in us, we do not fear Him. Do you fear God's punishment? God sent His Son to be our Saviour, and He took our punishment on the cross. Perfect love drives out fear. Because God is holy, great and mighty we must respect Him, but because of His great love, instead of fear, we have confidence before Him.

Just as our love for God takes away our fear, likewise in our churches there should be no fear. If there is love amongst us, we will not fear one another. Has your fear made you weak? Have you not done what God commanded you because you are afraid of your brother? Do the leaders in your church fail to make decisions because of fear of one another? If our love is real, it will take away our fear.

Loving our brother - 4:19 - 5:5

When John uses the word "to love" what does he mean? This sort of love is not a feeling: it is not the love that the world knows. This sort of loving comes from God (v.19). Because He lives in us, we can love Him, and we reveal our love by loving our brother. Even if we don't have a feeling of love in us, we are commanded to love. As we obey this command and show our love in practice, our love and our fellowship with God and with one another grows.

Does this command seem difficult to you? John says God's commands are not burdensome. Why? Because through our faith in Jesus Christ we have been born of God and He lives in us and enables us to obey Him.

Those who testify to Jesus Christ - 5:6-12

What did John mean when he said, "Jesus came by water and blood"? While there are different opinions, most believe "water" refers to Jesus' baptism, and "blood" speaks of His death. When Jesus began His ministry, as He was baptised, the Holy Spirit came upon Him and God witnessed saying, "This is My beloved Son". When He shed His blood on the cross, His death witnessed that His work was finished. The Jesus in whom we believe is truly man, truly God's Son, and the One who died for our sins on the cross. When we believe God's testimony about His Son, we have the testimony in our hearts as well. What is God's testimony to us? Read v.11-12. Does your heart witness to this?

The things we know - 5:13-21

1. John wrote so that "we know that we have eternal life" (v.13).
2. We know that God hears us and that we receive what we ask for in prayer if we ask according to His will (v.14-15).
3. We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin because God's Son keeps him safe (v.18).
4. We know that we are children of God (v.19).
5. We know that because God's Son came and gave us the ability to understand, we know Him and are in Him (v.20).

Prayer - 5:14-17

Before we finish our study on 1 John, let us look at what we learn here about prayer. We can come near to God with confidence because we know that He hears us and gives us what we ask. However, we need to remember that we must ask according to His will (v.14) and we must obey Him and please Him (3:22). We cannot give commands to God. In order that our prayers be answered, our fellowship and oneness with God must grow. Then we will learn to pray according to His will.

In v.16-18 John writes about prayer for those brothers who have fallen into sin. We must pray for them. Perhaps their sin is the sort for which there is no forgiveness (see Mk.3:28-30). But because we cannot be sure of this, we ought to continue to pray.

Questions for lesson 5

Memory verse: 1 John 5:14-15

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 5

1. What did you learn about fear from the notes?

2. What did you learn about prayer?

3. Read again the 5 things that John says we know, but, instead of saying "we know", read "I know". Do you truly know these things?

Day 2 2 John 1-3

4. (a) To whom was the letter written?

(b) What does John call himself?

5. What does John says lives in us and will be with us forever?

6. (a) From where are grace, mercy and peace found?

(b) Explain what these 3 words mean to you.

Day 3 2 John 4-6

7. What gave John great joy?

8. According to these verses, what is love?

9. (a) What 2 commands of God do you find in these verses?

(b) Which of these 2 is harder for you to obey? Why?

Day 4 2 John 7-13

10. (a) Who does not have God?

(b) Who has the Father and the Son?

11. (a) What command does God give concerning false teachers who come?

(b) Why?

12. What lesson can we learn from these verses?

Day 5 3 John 1-4

13. (a) To whom is this letter written?

(b) What does John say about this man in v.1?
14. (a) For what things does John praise him in v.2-3?

(b) Can people praise you for these things?
15. What did John pray for Gaius?

Day 6 3 John 5-10

16. For what does John praise Gaius in these verses?
17. What were the things Diotrephes did wrong?
18. (a) Which of these things is the root of all the other faults? (v.9)

(b) Examine your heart and see if this attitude is in you. If necessary, confess this sin to God and ask Him to help you to overcome it.

Day 7 3 John 11-13

19. What advice does John give to Gaius here?

20. What can we know about people who do evil?

21. What is the main thing you have learned from John's 3 epistles?

Lesson 6

2 & 3 John Walking in the Truth and in Love

2 John

John wrote this letter to "The chosen lady and her children". Probably when he said this, he meant that he was writing to a local church and its members. Much of the teaching in this letter resembles what John wrote in his first epistle. His two main messages are - walk in the truth; and love one another. He repeats his warnings about the false teachers. He tells us that we should not even greet such people or receive them into our homes. How can the "apostle of love" speak like this? If we love as we are commanded, ought we not to receive all into our home? True love must guard the truth. Because we must not support those who teach false doctrine we should not open our homes to them.

3 John

Again in this letter John emphasises walking in the truth (v.3-4). As we look at this epistle, we will concentrate on the lives of the three men mentioned in it.

1. **Gaius**: This man was a dear friend of John who was faithful to the truth, received Christian brothers into his home and was healthy in his soul. John praised him because he walked in the truth and in love. As we learned in 2 John, we must not receive false teachers into our churches and our homes. But we ought to show hospitality to true Christian teachers. Do you have people like Gaius in your church? Are you such a person?

2. **Diotrephes**: Here we see a very different sort of man. His main aim was to be first in the church. Therefore he would not accept John's authority, he gossiped about him and those sent from John, and he would not receive Christian brothers or let others receive them. This sort of person is found in many churches. Those who want to be first are a stumbling block to others and they are not true followers of Jesus Christ. Read Mk.10:42-45.

3. **Demetrius**: This man was probably the one who brought John's letter to Gaius. John gave witness about his good character, saying that everyone spoke well of him. Do people speak well of you? Is your life a good example to others?

Introduction to Philippians

Read Acts 16:11-40 to learn of Paul's first visit to Philippi and about the first believers there. About 10 years later, when Paul was a prisoner in Rome, the Philippian believers

heard about his imprisonment and they sent Epaphroditus to minister to him and to take a gift of money (4:18). After he had been with Paul for some time, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter of thanks to the church (2:25).

Although Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this letter, it is an epistle of joy and thanks. He encourages the Philippian believers in their suffering.

Questions for lesson 6

Memory verse: 3 John 11

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 6

1. What do we read about hospitality (a) in 2 John? (b) in 3 John?
2. What did Jesus teach about the one who wants to be first?
3. Who were some of the first believers in Philippi?

Day 2 Philippians 1:1-6

4. To whom did Paul write this letter?
5. What sort of prayer did Paul pray about the Philippians?
6. (a) What was Paul sure about? (v.6)

(b) What can we learn for ourselves from this verse?

Day 3 Philippians 1:7-11

7. Copy the words which show the great unity between Paul and the Philippian people.

8. Carefully read Paul's prayer in v.9-11. What are the things he wanted for the believers?

9. Which of these things do you want most for yourself today?

Day 4 Philippians 1:12-14

10. Because of Paul's imprisonment, what good things had happened?
(a) v.12 (b) v.13 (c)v.14

11. Can you think of an example of God doing something good through difficulty?

12. Is there some difficulty in your life today? Do you believe that God can do good from that?

Day 5 Philippians 1:15-18

13. What were the wrong motives that some people had when they preached the gospel?

14. Why did Paul rejoice?

15. What do you think our motives should be when we preach the gospel?

Day 6 Philippians 1:19-26

16. If Paul were to choose between life and death, which would be better for him?

17. Why was he willing to remain in this world?

18. (a) What was Paul's main goal? (v.20)

(b) What is your main goal in life?

Day 7 Philippians 1:27-30

19. Give examples of what it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (v.27)

20. What 2 privileges have been given to us? (v.29)

21. What suffering have you experienced for Christ?

Lesson 7

Philippians 1:1-30 Joy in Suffering

Thanksgiving and prayer - 1:1-11

The believers in Philippi were greatly loved by Paul. From the beginning they had been partners with him in the gospel. Now, although he was separated from them, he continued to pray for them. We also should always pray for all the people we love. From these verses we can learn some things about praying for other people. Firstly, we should thank God for them and for the good things we know about them (v.3). Secondly, we need to remember

that God is at work in their lives (v.4). Thirdly, we should pray not only for their physical needs, but especially that they will grow to know God and to please Him more and more (v.9-11).

Suffering and the gospel - 1:12-30

Although Paul could not now travel and preach the gospel as before, through his imprisonment the gospel was being spread. Sometimes, because of sickness or for another reason, we are not able to serve the Lord as we would desire. Nevertheless, God continues to work in and through us and we should not give up hope. Perhaps for a time our main work is to pray. If we are faithful in this great work, the gospel will spread through us.

Paul could have been troubled, not only because he was a prisoner, but also because there were people who opposed him. They preached the gospel so that others would honour them instead of Paul. But even in this Paul rejoiced because the gospel was being preached. When we have many problems what do we do? Instead of looking only at the difficulties, if we praise God for the work He is doing we can rejoice.

Paul was in prison awaiting judgment, and he did not know if he would be released or killed. He knew that if he died it would be gain for him because he would go to be with Christ. But he wanted God's will and that which was for the benefit of the believers in Philippi.

They also were suffering for the gospel. Paul tells them to live lives that would bring honour to the gospel of Christ (v.27), to be united (v.27), not to be afraid of those who opposed them (v.28), and to know that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ (v.29). Likewise, if we remember these things in times of suffering for the gospel we will be able to stand firm.

Questions for lesson 7

Memory verse: Philippians 1:29

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 7

1. What did you learn about praying for other people?
2. Which person do you think can do God's work the best - an evangelist? someone in prison? or a sick person?
3. What things should we remember when we are suffering for the gospel?

Day 2 Philippians 2:1-4

4. Which of the things mentioned in v.1 have you tasted and known: - the encouragement from being united with Christ, the comfort of His love, fellowship with the Spirit, tenderness and compassion?

5. (a) What things does Paul say we ought to do?

(b) What does Paul say we ought not to do?

6. (a) Which of these commands is hardest for you?

(b) What is God teaching you from these verses?

Day 3 Philippians 2:5-8

7. (a) Before He came to this earth, what was Christ's life like?

(b) What changes were there when He came to this earth?

8. What is the main thing that we learn about Jesus Christ's character in these verses?

9. (a) What lesson does Paul teach about ourselves in these verses?

(b) Are you willing to learn this lesson?

Day 4 Philippians 2:9-11

10. Because Jesus humbled Himself, what did God do?

11. What 2 things will every person do?

12. (a) When we do these 2 things, what are we witnessing about Jesus Christ and about our relationship with Him?

(b) Are you doing these 2 things?

Day 5 Philippians 2:12-18

13. In order that we become mature Christians, whose work is necessary?

14. (a) What command is given in v.14?

(b) Give examples of when you do these things.

15. What sort of people are Christians to be?

Day 6 Philippians 2:19-24

16. For what things does Paul praise Timothy?

17. If we were to seek the interests of Jesus Christ (v.21) what are some of the things we would do?

18. What lesson can you learn from Timothy's life?

Day 7 Philippians 2:25-30

19. Why had Epaphroditus come to Paul?

20. What sort of person was Epaphroditus?

21. (a) What should we do for people like Epaphroditus?

(b) Do you know men or women like him?

Lesson 8

Philippians 2:1-30 Joy in Serving

Christ's example - 2:1-8

In v.6-11 we read many wonderful things about the Lord Jesus Christ. As we learnt when we were studying 1st John, He is true God. His nature is the same as God the Father's. He is equal with God. But in these verses we learn also about His great humility. He voluntarily put aside His glory; He emptied Himself; He became a servant. Having become a man, He died a shameful death on the cross. When we read these verses we give praise and thanks to the Lord Jesus because of what He has done to save us.

But Paul also asks for another response from us. Why did he write these things about Jesus Christ's humility? It was because he wanted us to learn from His example (v.5). In humility we should consider others better than ourselves. We should look on the interests of others. Because of the blessings we have received (v.1), we must love others and live in unity with them. If Jesus is our Lord, we must resemble Him. Just as He humbled Himself and gave His life for us, so we must humble ourselves and care for others. Is your attitude like that of Jesus Christ?

Christ's exaltation - 2:9-11

Because Christ humbled Himself and obeyed, God raised Him to the highest place and has given to Him the greatest glory. Even although there are now many who do not give glory to Him, and many deny that He is Saviour, one day all will worship Him, and all will confess that He is Saviour, Christ and Lord. All those in heaven and on earth, and even Satan and his demons will confess that Jesus is Lord. We do not need to wait until that day to make Jesus Lord. Is He your Lord? Do you obey Him and serve Him?

Paul's advice - 2:12-16

God is at work in believers. He is the one who began the work and will complete it (1:6). However, we also must work hard to complete our salvation (v.12). How do we do this? As God enables us, we are to do His good will (v.13). Are you accustomed to grumbling and complaining? These are two things that will spoil our lives. If we do not remove them, we cannot be blameless and pure, and we will not shine like stars before unbelievers.

Three leaders - 2:17-30

Paul: Paul was not sure that he would be freed from prison. He was willing to die, and for his blood to be poured out like a sacrifice. Even in this he rejoiced. Instead of complaining, even in our troubles, we can rejoice.

Timothy: Serving with Paul in the work of the gospel, Timothy was like a son to him. Why was he useful to Paul and to the Lord? He was genuinely concerned for the welfare of others (v.20). Do you want to be a good servant for Christ? Do you want to be a good helper for others who serve? Begin by thinking about other people and their problems. (Read 2:3-4 again.) If we are those who look out for our own interests only, we can never be good servants of Christ (v.21).

Epaphroditus: This man also was a true servant of Jesus Christ. He risked his life for the work of Christ (v.30). Do you also have this attitude? Jesus said, "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it." (Matt.10:39)

Questions for lesson 8

Memory verse: Philippians 2:3

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 8

1. Why did Paul write about Jesus' humility?
2. What will happen if we do not remove grumbling and complaining from our lives?
3. What lesson did you learn from Timothy's life?

Day 2 Philippians 3:1-3

4. (a) What command does Paul repeat?

(b) Is this difficult for you to do today? Will you obey?

5. Those mentioned in v.2 are all one group of people. About what did they teach falsely?

6. Who are those who have the true circumcision?

Day 3 Philippians 3:4-6

7. What does Paul have more of than other people?

8. (a) What does v.5 tell us about his people and race?

(b) What do we learn about his religious practices?

9. Write briefly about your people, tribe and the religion which you knew from childhood.

Day 4 Philippians 3:7-11

10. How does Paul now consider those things in which he used to have confidence?

11. Read your answer to the 9th question. Is your confidence in these things?

12. What does Paul teach us here about righteousness?

Day 5 Philippians 3:7-11

13. What is Paul's greatest desire? (v.8)

14. What other things does he want?

15. (a) What is the main goal in your life?

(b) What can you do to fulfill that goal?

Day 6 Philippians 3:12-16

16. (a) What does Paul do concerning that which is behind?

(b) Should you also do this?

(c) What do you think it means to do this?

17. (a) What does Paul do concerning that which is ahead?

(b) How can we do this?

18. (a) When does a runner receive the prize?

(b) When will we receive our prize?

Day 7 Philippians 3:17-21

19. About what things do those who are enemies of the cross think?

20. (a) Of what country are believers citizens?

(b) Therefore, on what should we concentrate our thoughts?

(c) What does this mean? Do you do this?

21. What will happen when Jesus Christ returns?

Lesson 9

Philippians 3:1-21 Joy in Hope

Rejoicing and watching - 3:1-3

Paul did not say, "Rejoice!" This is often impossible for us to do. He said, "Rejoice in the Lord!" Whatever happens to us, we can rejoice because the Lord is with us, and because of what He has done for us. Paul was a prisoner when he wrote this, and he was in difficult circumstances. Nevertheless he rejoiced in the Lord. Habakkuk was another man who

rejoiced in God even though many difficult circumstances may come. Read Hab.3:17-18. Are you in the midst of difficulties today? Rejoice in the Lord!

The people Paul writes about in v.2 were Judaizers. These men taught saying, "Works of the Law are necessary for salvation; faith alone is not enough." Especially, they emphasised the O.T. ordinance of circumcision. Paul called them dogs, and evil men. Deut.30:6 says, "The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live." Paul tells us that those who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Jesus Christ are those who have the true circumcision. The outward, physical ordinance cannot help our salvation. Likewise we must watch out for those who say to us, "If you don't add this or that to your faith, you cannot be saved." Outward things do not complete our salvation.

Paul's goal - 3:4-14

Paul was born an Israelite, one of God's people. From his childhood he was faithful in the religion of the Jews. He became a Pharisee, i.e. one of those who studied God's Law and were very careful in keeping it. But now he counted all these things as worthless. Were you born to a Christian family? Do you put confidence in that? Have you kept God's Law and trust in what you have done? Do you put confidence in your ministry for God? If our main aim is not to know Christ, all of these things are worthless. Our righteousness comes from faith in Christ, not from what we do (v.9).

In v.8 Paul says that more than anything else, he wants to know Christ. What Paul is saying here is, not that he wants to know about Christ, but that he wants to know Him. He wanted his relationship with Him to grow. This is not an easy thing. As we grow in our relationship with Christ, we may suffer, and we may need to become like Him in His death (v.10). Are you willing for this? Like Paul, can you say, "More than anything else, I want to know Christ"?

When Paul wrote this letter, he had been a Christian for many years. But he did not yet count himself as perfect (v.12). Like a runner in a race, he did not look back to what had been before, but keeping his eye on the prize at the end of the race, he pressed on. Until we die, our race is not finished. Like Paul, let us forget what is behind and press on toward what is ahead (v.13).

Christian maturity - 3:15-20

The word "mature" in v.15 means to be spiritually strong. A mature Christian is one who continues the race, looking forward towards the Lord Jesus. His mind is not on earthly things (v.19). Knowing that his citizenship is in heaven, He awaits the Saviour who will come from there to change us. Are you weak in body? When the Lord returns, He will change your body to resemble His body (v.21). God has never said, "On this earth you will have complete health and you will live in comfort." This may not be His will for you and for me. But He has promised us, "Jesus Christ will return. Then your bodies will be changed and there will be no more sickness, and no more suffering." Whatever our circumstances, let us rejoice in the Lord and eagerly await our Saviour's coming.

Questions for lesson 9

Memory verse: Philippians 3:10-11

Day 1 Read the notes for lesson 9

1. Why is it that we can always rejoice?
2. Who are those who have the true circumcision?
3. What answer would you give to someone who says, "If you have faith, God will heal you from every sickness and He will give you whatever you want"?

Day 2 Philippians 4:1-3

4. What do we learn here about Euodia and Syntyche?
5. In order that they be reconciled, what 2 things did Paul ask?
6. When Christians are not in agreement, what can we do?

Day 3 Philippians 4:4-7

7. (a) What are we not to do?

(b) Do you do this? When?
8. (a) What are we to pray about?

(b) How are we to pray?

9. (a) What will be the result if we do these things?

(b) Can you give an example of this from your life?

Day 4 Philippians 4:8-9

10. List the 8 things we are to think about.

11. If our thoughts are concentrated on these things, what sort of things will we not concentrate on?

12. (a) What lesson can you learn for yourself here?

(b) How can you change your way of thinking?

Day 5 Philippians 4:10-13

13. (a) In what good circumstances had Paul lived?

(b) In what difficult circumstances had Paul lived?

14. (a) What had Paul learned from this?

(b) In what circumstances do you now live? Have you learned the lesson that Paul learned?

15. (a) Why was Paul able to live like this?

(b) What should you do when your situation is difficult?

Day 6 Philippians 4:14-20

16. In what way was the church at Philippi different from other churches?

17. (a) Although their offerings were given to Paul, what was the result before God?

(b) What can we learn from this?

18. If we are generous in giving to the Lord, what will we lack?

Day 7 Philippians 4:21-23 Read the notes for lesson 10

19. What is Paul's last prayer for the Philippian believers?

20. (a) What will God's peace guard our hearts from?

(b) What must we guard our hearts from?

21. To whom does God promise to give everything he needs?

Lesson 10

Philippians 4:1-23 Joy in All Circumstances

Agree with each other - 4:1-3

Although Paul praised the believers in Philippi for many things, he rebuked them because there was disharmony amongst them (2:2 and 4:2). Even if there are only a few in our church who do not agree together, it can spoil the church and our testimony. Paul wrote directly to these two women, knowing that, unless they were willing to be reconciled, nothing could be done. Who is there in your church with whom you have no unity? Are you willing to agree together in the Lord? Paul also asked another person to help the two women to be reconciled (v.3). Can you help reconcile those in your church who do not agree? The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the peace makers" (Matt.5:9).

Rejoice and pray - 4:4-7

What do you do when some difficulty arises in your life? What do you do when you look at difficulties which lie ahead of you? Do you get anxious? Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord; pray about everything; give thanks always; don't worry." When we look to the Lord and commit our problems to Him in prayer, He will take our anxiety away. Instead of anxiety, we will have peace. That peace will be greater than we thought and will guard our hearts and minds in Christ (v.7).

Guard your thoughts - 4:8-9

We too are to guard our minds (v.8). It is there that Satan often tempts us. If our thoughts are concentrated on what is impure, false and ugly, he can easily lead us to do these kinds of things. But when we concentrate our thoughts on things that are pure, lovely, true, etc., our words and actions will be like our thoughts.

Giving and receiving - 4:10-23

There are two verses in this section which we often quote because they give us God's promises - v.13 and v.19. Let us think carefully about why Paul wrote these verses so that we can fully understand them. We read in v.13 that in the strength that God gives, we can do all things. But in particular, in the previous verses, Paul was speaking about one difficult thing for which he needed God's strength. What was this difficult thing? To be content whatever the circumstances of his life. We cannot do this without God's strength, but with His help, it is possible for us.

When we read v.19, we also need to look at v.14-18. In these verses Paul writes about the generosity of the Philippians in giving gifts to him. These gifts are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. More than this, because of their generous giving, they can be certain that God will meet all their needs. The Lord Jesus said that God will give us everything we need when we seek first His kingdom (Matt.6:33). Paul here in these verses gives the promise in v.19 to a church which was generous. If we as individuals, or our church, seek our own things first, and if we are not generous in our giving to God's work, we cannot claim this promise for ourselves. Read Haggai 1:9-11. When God's people neglected God's house to build their own houses, they did not have their needs supplied. Has God not supplied all your need? Is your church lacking what you need? If this is so, answer these questions. Are you putting God's kingdom first, or is your concentration on earthly things or things for yourself? Do you give generously? God's riches are beyond counting. When you put Him first, He will supply all you need. To Him be glory for ever and ever, amen (v.20).

ADDITIONAL NOTES/QUESTIONS

Memory Verses for 1, 2 & 3 John and Philippians

1. 1 John 5:13 ~ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.
2. 1 John 2:9 ~ He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.
3. 1 John 3:2-3 ~ Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
4. 1 John 4:4 ~ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.
5. 1 John 5:14-15 ~ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.
6. 3 John 11 ~ Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.
7. Philippians 1:29 ~ *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*
8. Philippians 2:3 ~ *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*
9. Philippians 3:10-11 ~ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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