

Philippians: The Friends and Family Plan

Intro: [Seaplane crash story from *The Man in the Mirror* (Morley) where a father dies with his son rather than leave him and save himself.]

“The book of Philippians is about church life, about life lived as a family.”
 (among other things)

In looking at Philippians as church life and church life pictured as family... a key subset under what it means to be “in Christ.”

| 1. FRIENDS | VERSE |
|--|-----------|
| Word #1: “participation” (“fellowship,” ESV “partnership”) | 1:5 |
| Word #2: “partaker” (NIV “one who shares”) | 1:7 |
| Word #3: “striving together” (ESV “striving side-by-side”) | 1:27; 4:3 |
| Word #4: “companion” (KJV and NIV “yokefellow”) | 4:3 |
| Word #5: “fellow workers” | 4:3; 2:25 |
| Word #6: “fellow soldier” | 2:25 |
| Word #7: “brother” | 2:25 |

2. FAMILY

The Primary Picture in the New Testament for the Church: *Siblings* --used more frequently than friendship.

[Read 4:1] Note all the terms of endearment in this verse. The word “brethren” or “brothers” (and we could include “sisters” in this as well), is the most common picture used in the NT for the church (180 times, 9 in Phil.). Much more often than other pictures “bride,” “temple,” or “priests.” (only a few times each).

The church functioned like an ancient Mediterranean family, not like a modern American family. What values did an ancient Mediterranean family have?

“The bloodline of the father is everything.”

The most important relationships, after one's father, would be with one's siblings--greater even than a husband (who could divorce her--cultural norm).

[See Discussion 1]

3. WHAT DO FRIENDS AND FAMILY DO?

Philippians 2:3-4-- *what a sibling, or a close friend, in the first century would do.*

Philippians 2:5-8-- *Not just theological--Jesus is leading out in humbling himself in the interest of others.*

Philippians 2:19-23-- *Timothy as example... then Epaphroditus and Paul later ...*

"Our Lord" used 53 times--"my Lord" used **once**. Yet we speak so often of a "personal Savior" (have it reversed).

"The New Testament simply does not know of the concept of a lone ranger Christian."

New Testament letters were written to the church, not individuals.

QUESTION: *Do I have siblings, in the NT sense of the word, here at DSC?*

QUESTION: *In a CG?--How can we do the "one anothers" of the NT better?*

[See Discussions 2 & 3]

Next Week's Text:

Luke 17:20-37

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Study Helps and Application

Discussion 1: Love in Action. Think about how far you'd go to save or help your child, your spouse, etc. Would you lay down your life for your child? Would you move your family for one member's health? Or sell possessions to pay for a needed medical treatment for them? Would allow them to go without food? Would you drop everything and drive across town to tow their broken down car to the shop? ...

- *Are you willing to love your brothers on a more radical level? What kind of love-in-action is commanded in the following text?*

^{ESV} **1 John 3:14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.** ¹⁷ But **if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?** ¹⁸ **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

[Sacrificial material/financial support... Everyone in your CG may be fairly well off. If you're no aware of any needy brothers, *look around!*--We have become so accustomed to hiding away in our comfortable suburban homes and church buildings. There have needy brothers right here in the city--find them and bless them. Also, the deacons can always use additional funds (designated for benevolence) to meet crisis needs that come in to the church.]

- *Discuss whether or not the following qualifies as love-in-action.*

^{ESV} **Matthew 18:15** "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

[Church discipline is a loving act, and should be practiced beginning at the family and CG level. (Ref. www.ninemarks.org--note "Mark 7"). This can be one of the more difficult forms of love to practice.]

- *Why might you be accused of being unloving? Why isn't it?*

[Scaling the Language Barrier: "Love" in our culture tends to be equated with "unconditional acceptance." To confront someone about their behavior or some aspect of their character is by definition--"unloving."]

- **How does true Biblical love differ?--relate it back to Phil 2:3-4**

- **What are the interests of others?**

[salvation, sanctification (transformation towards holiness), physical necessities for life, joy and comfort, ...]

- **Discuss the extent of "others" in this text. When you meet one [other] person's need, how might that affect "other others"?**

[Awkward question, so use the examples below to clarify. In each case explore not only the effect on the original person, but the extended effects.]

- You meet Joe's financial need--it affects Joe and his family. What about others who witness this love-in-action?

[John 13:35--"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, ..."]

- You confront James for sin in his life--it affects James. What about others who witness this love-in-action? What if James does not repent and be restored?

[How does confronting sin affect people indirectly? Purification of the church... demonstrates sin is taken seriously ...]

Discussion 2: Family--Who is My Brother? We must recognize and acknowledge the importance that God places on the family. Marriage is a highly held covenantal relationship about which there is a lot of teaching (fidelity, love & submission, mutual submission...). The parent-child relationship is also highly regarded (teach your children, obey your parents, ...). Yet, as highly as these are regarded in Scripture, Jesus shakes our perceptions:

^{ESV} **Mark 3:32** And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." ³³ And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" ³⁴ And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" ³⁵ For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

- **Did Jesus abandon/break from his earthly family?** [No. See John 19:26-27; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:7. Jesus emphasizes the priority of **the messianic community of faith as the core family of God** (Ex. 32:25-29; Deut. 33:8-9): whoever does the will of God (see Matt. 6:10; John 7:17; Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 4:2), he is my brother and sister and mother (see Ps. 22:23; Heb. 2:11-12).] [From ESV Study Bible Online Edition--Mark 3:35 notes]

- *Have you recognized how consistently and emphatically our family-of-God relationships are described in Scripture?*

- **God's Children:**

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:4** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, **so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

^{ESV} **Ephesians 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us **for adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

- **Siblings:** *[only a sampling... Ron mentioned there are ~180 references and explained the 1st century Mediterranean family model context where siblings are strongly bound]*

^{ESV} **Romans 15:14** I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 16:20** All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:13** For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 4:9** Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more,

- *What's closer than a brother? How about being of the same body and part of one another?*

^{ESV} **Romans 12:4** For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 4:25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

- **Discuss the implications of being of the same body.**

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 12:25** ...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

[Ever have a toothache or jam your pinky toe in the dark? ... Is the rest of your body *engaged?*...]

- *Ron said we should ask ourselves: "Do I have siblings, in the NT sense of the word, here at Desert Springs Church?"*

[Not “do I see everyone that way?” ... but do you have a small group that is or is becoming your siblings? Your CG may be nowhere near this level of intimacy and commitment, don’t try to pressure everyone to love one another unnaturally--we’ll look later at how to do it supernaturally.]

- *If not, do you even want this?*

[Pursue honesty here! Culturally we typically do not want this... we’d rather have our space. Lead out in confession and repentance here... “lone ranger Christians” are foreign to Scripture--that’s a way of saying “they don’t exist”]

Discussion 3: Power to obey; power to change. In our flesh we are selfish and powerless to change our hearts. Are we not happy to be of “one mind”(1:27;2:2) as long as everyone agrees with us? Even as Paul prays for their (our) love to abound “more and more” (1:9), and prescribes a supernatural love for the brethren, he also identifies our source of power to obey.

- *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”*

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

- *Salvation by works? [try to cover this quickly--not the focus of the study]*

[Not at all, at least not our works--Paul consistently teaches otherwise (cf. 3:2-11, Eph 2:8-9). It is helpful with this verse to always read the following verse with it and also to refer back to Paul’s opening]

^{ESV} **Philippians 1:6** And I am sure of this, that **he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ **for it is God who works in you**, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[v.12 is not a “how a person is justified before God” salvation verse, but a call to work out what God is working in.]

- *Can you love like this?*

^{ESV} **John 15:12** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

[**No, now do it.** As Jesus commanded the dead to rise, the blind to see, the withered hand to stretch forth, the lame to walk ... he now calls on the love-lame to walk in supernatural love. Trust that he will provide the power and step out. *Pray for one another for this supernatural love.*]

optional... as time permits

Discussion 4: Importance of Discernment and Doctrine. It is hard to miss Paul's emphasis on doctrinal purity in this letter. He speaks of his "defense and confirmation of the gospel" (1:7) and declares "I am put here for the defense of the gospel" (1:15). **It also appears in his prayer that our love "abound more and more."**

^{NASB} **Philippians 1:9** And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more *in real knowledge and all discernment*, ¹⁰ *so that* you may approve the things that are excellent, *in order to* be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- *Discuss how "real knowledge" and "all discernment" are related to abounding love, recognizing what is excellent, and being sincere and blameless.*

[Take the conversation into the area of "authenticity." Disillusioned with popular church-as-we-know-it, many are now demanding a Christianity lived out more authentically (such as mutual love, care for the poor...). This is a good thing! In our desire to be authentic, the question we must repeatedly ask is "an authentic what?" We can only find the answer revealed in Scripture and illuminated in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.]

Memory Verse

^{ESV} **John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Additional Resources

- *Philippians* sermon series by Ryan Kelly at Desert Springs Church--especially the first message in the series.
http://www.desertspringschurch.org/messages/By_Series/Philippians/
- *What is a Healthy Church Member?* by Thabiti Anyabwile.

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- *Are you willing to love your brothers on a more radical level? What kind of love-in-action is commanded in the following text? 1 John 3:14-18*
- *Discuss whether or not these qualify as love-in-action. Matt 18:15-17; Gal 6:1-2*
 - *Why might you be accused of being unloving? Why isn't it?*
 - *How does true Biblical love differ?--relate it back to Phil 2:3-4*
 - *What are the interests of others?*
 - *Discuss the extent of "others" in this text. When you meet one [other] person's need, how might that affect "other others"?*
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- *Did Jesus abandon/break from his earthly family?*
- *Have you recognized how consistently and emphatically our family-of-God relationships are described in Scripture?*
 - *God's Children: Gal. 4:4-5; Eph 1:3-5*

- **Siblings:** [only a sampling... Ron mentioned there are ~180 references...]
Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 16:20; Gal 5:13 1Th 4:9-10
- **What’s closer than a brother? How about being of the same body and part of one another?** Rom 12:4-5; Eph 4:25
 - **Discuss the implications of being of the same body.** 1 Cor 12:25-26
 - **Ron said we should ask ourselves: “Do I have siblings, in the NT sense of the word, here at Desert Springs Church?” --If not, do you even want this?**

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- **“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”** Phil 2:12
 - **Salvation by works?** Phil 1:6; 2:12-13
- **Can you love like this?** John 15:12

[Optional] Discussion 4: Importance of Discernment and Doctrine. It is hard to miss Paul’s emphasis on doctrinal purity in this letter. He speaks of his “defense and confirmation of the gospel” (1:7) and declares “I am put here for the defense of the gospel” (1:15). **It also appears in his prayer that our love “abound more and more.”: Philippians 1:9-11**

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