

Study 03
“Gospel First”
Philippians 1:12-26



Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Philippians 1:12-26 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. As part of our Sunday gathering this week, we talked about the importance of building community with one another. What are some of the activities that help you to build relationships with others?
2. We see in the beginning of this passage that even in the midst of a difficult situation, Paul still sees ways in which God can be working in his life and the life of others. Is there a situation you have experienced recently that you have seen God at work in?

Digging Deeper

1. Paul’s deep affection for the followers of Christ in Philippi is evident in his concern about their concern for his situation. In 1:12-14 he assures them that he is doing alright, and that his shame (being under house arrest) has served to “advance the gospel” despite everything. How do you think his “gospel first” attitude can help Paul see God’s purposes in his situation? (cf. Gen 50:20)
2. Paul turns shame into honour and “chains” into furthering the gospel. How does Paul’s “gospel first” attitude help turn things upside down in his culture? How can we do the same in our circumstances?
3. How does Paul describe “the gospel”? (see 1:15, 17) Scot McKnight describes the gospel as “the story about Jesus that fulfils the promises of Israel’s story, and this Jesus is announced in the gospel.” How is McKnight’s description different from how we tend to think about the good news of Jesus? (If you want to see how the early church understood the gospel, take a look at the sermons in Acts)
4. There appears to be some rival preachers of the gospel who are using Paul’s misfortunes to make themselves seem more important (read 1:15-18a). Paul counters that no matter what the motive, he rejoices that the gospel is being preached. While we are uncertain of the exact situation Paul is referring to, how do our motives impact how we bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ?
5. In light of the above question, we probably think more of appropriate or inappropriate *methods* of preaching the gospel than *motives* (like the reference to the street corner preacher in the sermon). How do you think both are important? How would preaching “out of love” influence our methods?
6. What do you think of how Paul viewed the idea of his death from a “gospel lens”? (1:20-26; compare 2Cor 1:8-11). As a Christ follower, Paul recognized his death was not the end. How does this perspective help Paul rejoice no matter his circumstances?

Living it Out

1. Last week we asked you how the message of the gospel is good news in your life. Thinking about that answer, how might you be able to share that good news with others this week? What might it look like for you to bear witness to Jesus this week?
2. What spiritual practices are there that can help you rejoice no matter what your circumstances? (cultivating gratitude? Having a “gospel first lens”?)