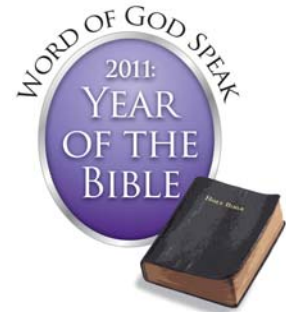


Week 41: Ephesians 5 – Philipians – Colossians 1 Study Guide for the week of October 10-16, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Philippians 2:5-11. Here is what some call the “Philippian Hymn.” Some believe that this was actually a hymn that the church in Philippi sung. Try reading this hymn in other translations. List all the truths that this hymn teaches about Jesus. What part of the hymn do you find most compelling in its description of Jesus? The Revised Standard Version’s rendering of verse 7 is, “*he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave.*” What does it mean to you that Jesus “emptied himself and become a slave” for you? If you were to graph the flow of this hymn, it is like an upside down bell curve. At the start Jesus is described as God. He descends to the point of death on a cross. Then he is raised to the highest position of Lord. If you can remember the second article of the Apostles Creed, it follows the same flow. How does this help you to better understand the incarnation of Jesus? How does your knee bend and your tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord? What is one way that you would like to further humble yourself before Jesus?

Discussion starters *If you are leading a life group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: What is the characteristic that you admired most in your parents’ marriage?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Ephesians 4:29, 5:4 What are these verses teaching? What do you think is included in “unwholesome talk”? Notice that there is both what not to do and what to do in these verses.
4. Ephesians 5:21-33 What are these verses teaching about marriage? Are there any parts of this teaching that trouble you? Try interpreting the whole passage in light of the first and last verses, vss. 21, 33. In the summary verse 33, what are the different commands given to wives and to husbands? What is the promise given to both in verse 31?
5. Ephesians 6:10-18 Go through each piece of the armor of God and describe what you think is its function in the spiritual battle. Which is the piece that you find most necessary in your spiritual battle? What is the piece that you would like God to strengthen in you?
6. Philippians 1:21-24 What is Paul saying in this passage? Can you identify with what Paul is saying? How?
7. Philippians 2:1-4 What are the traits that Paul is exhorting Christians to have? What would it be like if a body of Christ followers lived out these traits with each other? Which one of the traits would you like to see grow in yourself? Why?
8. Philippians 3:7-11 Can you really look on everything you have gained in your life as “rubbish” compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus? How?
9. Philippians 4:4-7 What for you is the “peace of God, which transcends all understanding?”
10. Philippians 4:8 We have seen elsewhere in Paul’s writing, here is the importance of the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) and taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). What does this verse teach you about the importance of thinking on the things of God? What do you think is the result of such mental work?
11. Philippians 4:22 and 1:12-13 These verses offer a fascinating historical glimpse into the impact that Paul’s mission was having at the highest levels of society. What is the value of the gospel reaching those who are in positions of power and influence? What examples have you see of this? What can be the pitfalls with this?

Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:6-7

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. Praying out of Ephesians 6:10-18 (question #5 above), one possibility this week would be to pray for each other using this question:

What is the piece of the Armor of God that you would like God to strengthen in you?

After everyone has shared, go into a time of prayer having the person to your right pray for you according to your answer to the question. If you are in a group with all married couples, you could have husbands and wives pray for each other.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a life group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in life groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.