



***Things to Let Go of in Our Christian Lives:
A Study on the Book of Philippians***

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Note: This is a lengthy Bible study which has been divided into five parts.

Day 1

Introduction

If you are like me, you have too much stuff: Closets filled with clothes you never wear, draws so full they barely close, and rows of boxes lining your garage.

- What is one place in your home that you know needs to be decluttered?

Besides accumulating too much stuff physically, we can accumulate things in our heart that clutters our spiritual lives. The Book of Philippians, written by Paul, while he was imprisoned, could serve as a spiritual uncluttering guide.

- Take the time to read the entire book of Philippians in one sitting. Don't panic, it is only 4 chapters and a total of 104 verses. Take note of any verses that seem to jump out at you and speak to your heart.

In the book of Philippians, the four chapters give us four things that we should let go of, things that are only cluttering our hearts, things that keep us from making an impact on the world for God's kingdom.

Day 2

1. Let go of your plans and expectations.

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

Paul boldly says, *“that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel”* (v. 12). Verse 13 clearly tells us he is in prison! He mentions the palace guard and the chains he is wearing for Christ.

Did Paul plan on spending a lot of his ministry in prison? Definitely not! But Paul didn't let the unplanned things of his life stop him from continuing to share the good news of Jesus to others. God's ways is best, even if it doesn't look what you've envisioned for your life. bad situations can be used for good and growth.

Have you ever been in a place not of your choosing? Probably. Have things ever gone differently than you have planned? Of course – it is part of life!

Christian author Karen Ehman writes this of Paul, *“He doesn't complain about his physical location. Instead he rejoices in the progress being made in the eternal realm... His prison becomes his platform.”*

- What plans or expectations do you need to let go of?
- How can you see purpose in what you are walking through today?

Despite things not being as Paul planned, he chose to rejoice (v. 18). What good could Paul see in his situation? Ultimately, his focus was on Jesus and what Jesus could do through him. Joni Eareckson Tada writes, *“Every tough circumstance should provide opportunity to advance the gospel.”*

- How can you choose joy in your situation today?
- Write out Philippians 1:27, which serves as Paul's agenda for the entire letter.

Notice the first part of the verse: *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.* How do we let go of our plans and expectations, especially when God allows hard times and situations to come our way? First we choose joy (v. 18), and secondly, we remember our calling and live accordingly. It isn't about our agenda or plans, but about God's.

Day 3

2. Let go of selfish ambitions.

Read Philippians 2:1-5.

Let's be honest, we all tend to be selfish, we think about our own needs, wants and desires. But selfishness gets us nowhere. Selfishness is not conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are to put others first, just as Jesus did.

- Write what verse 5 commands (that means it is not optional) us to do.

The Voice Translation puts verse 5 this way: ***In other words, adopt the mind-set of Jesus the Anointed. Live with His attitude in your hearts.*** The Passion Translation renders verse 5: ***And consider the example that Jesus, the Anointed One, has set before us. Let his mindset become our motivation.***

What was Jesus' example and mindset? **Read Philippians 2:6-11.**

- How did Jesus show us He was thinking about others and not Himself?

What would have happened if Jesus selfishly thought of Himself, and not our need for salvation? We would still be lost in our sins. Karen Ehman writes, *"The love of Christ, revealed in His incarnation and in His death, is a love that yields its rights for the sake of others and empties itself in order to serve."*

- How can you show unselfish service to someone today?

Time for a heart check. How selfish are you? Most of us aren't quick to admit that we are selfish. I am a wife, mother, and officer and am always putting others needs before my own. However, my attitude while serving others can be a good gauge for the condition of my heart. If I am grumbling and complaining because I have to cook yet another meal for my family, or I grouse as I wash all the clothes, or I mutter under my breath because someone is calling me yet again to talk because she is having yet another crisis, I am not truly serving unselfishly. Paul knew that selfishness could creep in quite easily.

Read Philippians 2:14.

This is another command and it is quite clear that we should do **EVERYTHING** without grumbling or arguing. Everything means all, no exceptions.

The definition of grumbling is “to complain or protest about something in a bad-tempered but typically muted way.” It is those under our breath remarks we make, the big sighs and the eye rolls. Often we grumble only to ourselves; but God knows the attitudes of our heart.

When we let go of grumbling and arguing, what happens? **Read Philippians 2:15.** Karen Ehman writes, “*When we choose to refrain from grumbling and disputing in all things, we shine the light of Jesus and keep this brilliance from growing dim. May our behavior not only be visibly different from those who don’t follow Jesus, but may it also pique their curiosity about our opposite behavior, giving us an opportunity to tell them the good news of the gospel...*”

- What have you grumbled, complained or argued about today?
- What is something you grumble or complain about consistently?
- What steps will you take to let go of selfishness and to stop complaining today?

Once again in verses 16-18, we see Paul choosing to rejoice. Rather than grumble, complain or argue with God about what has been dealt to him, he chooses to rejoice. Ask God to help you choose gratitude rather than grumbling.

Day 4

3. Let go of the past.

Think back for a moment about the best thing that has ever happened in your past? What is the greatest achievement you accomplished in high school or college? Think of a lesson you learned in the past. Think of a mistake you made or a regret you have?

There is nothing wrong with the past, but we shouldn’t be living there.

Read Philippians 3:1-14.

In Paul’s day, there were a group of people called the Judaizers that were teaching that you needed more than just Jesus for salvation; they were emphasizing that certain works must also be done, such as the act of circumcision (see Galatians 2:1-14). Paul in this passage was emphasizing that right standing with God has nothing to do with one’s credentials.

- What according to verses 4-6, could Paul brag about from his past?

- What does Paul have to say about all his accomplishments in verses 7-8?

All of Paul's past experiences and opportunities he considered as rubbish or garbage! What do you do with garbage? You throw it away! The only thing that mattered to Paul, was to know Christ (v. 10).

- Write out Philippians 3:12-14

We are told to forget what was behind. All those accomplishments and achievements don't matter. That also means those past sins and failures aren't significant. What matters is moving forward. Karen Ehman explains, *"The word translated forgetting isn't a mere failure to remember... it means calculated and purposeful neglect, a realization that you no longer care for it. ...This forgetting of the past allows Paul to do his part to run unhindered and with clarity."*

- Where is our focus to be? **Read also Philippians 1:20-21.**

Our focus should be always looking forward to what is to come – what God is going to do in and through you now, and the glorious future that awaits those who have received Him as their Savior.

- What from your past is hindering your current walk with the Lord?
- How will you keep your eyes focused on the future?

Day 5

4. Let go of worry.

We have come to the last chapter of Philippians, and have already covered a lot of ground, but Paul isn't done. Paul puts a lot in the last chapter of this book. If you are alive and breathing you have things you are worried about. It is part of being a human living on planet earth.

- What are your top three worries on your mind right now?

Read Philippians 4:4-9.

Once again, we see Paul mentioning that he is rejoicing. You can't worry and rejoice at the same time. Once again it is a matter of choice. Paul chooses to focus his mind not on his worries, but on the character of God. It says *the Lord is near* in verse 5. What a comfort to Paul, alone in prison to know that the nearness of God was with him. It is also Paul looking forward to that prize awaiting him, because the return of the Lord is near.

- Verse 6 is another command. What is the solution to worry?
- What is the promise in verse 7 we receive if we choose to pray rather than worry?

When we pray and stop worrying, God's peace comes and fills our hearts. In verse 9, Paul mentions God's peace again – the promise that His peace will be with you.

- Spend some time in prayer now, giving your worries that you listed previously to the Lord.

Besides praying, another way to get rid of our worries, is to focus on what fills our minds. Most of what we worry about never comes to pass. So instead of thinking about what could be, Paul tells us what to think about in Philippians 4:8.

- What are should we be thinking about?

Karen Ehman writes this about verse 8: *“The phrase think about in the original language means more than rambling thoughts floating around in our brains. It implies to purposefully consider, to take into account, to compute, to calculate or reckon. All of these verbs or phrases show a deliberate action, highlighting our need to be intentional in our thoughts, to not let our thoughts run wild but to rein them in, preventing them from causing us disquiet.”*

- What is one thought you keep having that needs to change?
- How are you going to put verse 8 into practice?

Often our worries focus around not having enough of something to meet our needs. Paul addresses this as well. **Read Philippians 4:10-20.**

Discontentment is an issue that we all struggle with. Discontentment means “dissatisfaction with one’s circumstances.” Paul had already said not to worry about anything, and that includes the circumstances you find yourself in.

- What are some of things you are discontent with in your life right now?
- Paul said he had learned how to be content in verse 13. What was the secret to contentment?

Karen Ehman explains that being content is *“literally ‘to be satisfied to the point where I am no longer disturbed or disquieted...’ We do it with a quiet trust and submission that shows that we know He knows what is best for us and we will trust Him.*

Contentment doesn’t come from perfect circumstances – because guess what, circumstances and situations will never be perfect. Contentment comes from our relationship with Christ. When we are with Christ, we need not worry about circumstances, what we have or don’t have, because no matter what, God will provide. God provided for Paul, and He will also provide for you.

- What does verse 19 promise?

Now that should give you a reason to relax. God’s got this!

CONCLUSION

Just like physical decluttering is a process (and is never done), so decluttering our spiritual lives is also a process. This side of heaven we aren’t finished products, just because we let these four things go during this study, doesn’t mean we won’t struggle with them again. I would encourage you to do a spiritual decluttering of your heart on a regular basis.

- What is the biggest take away you got from this study?
- What are you going to let go of?

Note: The quotes from Karen Ehman came from <https://first5.org/> (this is a free, downloadable app, that studies God’s Word a book at a time) and her study *Philippians: What Matters Most* (Under plans in the First 5 app)