

Being Disciples: Practicing the Way of Jesus

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

Practicing the Way of Jesus Together For Brooklyn

Dear RPS family,

Nothing can be as discouraging and disorienting as facing hardship in this life. We spend much of our time, energy, and efforts avoiding it or at least doing our best to insulate us from its effects. This year has brought a unique set of hardships to all of us. These last few months have been harder for some than it has for others. But we're not here to compare notes on who has had a tougher year. We are here to practice the way of Jesus which means we will most certainly face hardship in this world, and at the same time we can expect God to draw near to us and ultimately deliver us from our hardship. In fact, nothing will lead to transformation and growth as a disciple of Jesus like facing hardship, loss and suffering redemptively.

Paul teaches us what it means to face hardship, not as a Stoic, but as a faithful follower of Jesus living with hope in the middle of suffering and trials. In this passage, we see Paul facing the limitations of his situation, relying deeply on the people of God, and ultimately rejoicing in his life in Christ. This, as Paul tells us throughout Philippians, is the work of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus. As you consider the humbling reality of hardship in your life and in our world, pray that God would open our eyes to His presence in the midst of hardship and the hope we have in Christ.

May God be with you this week and may this prayer guide you this week:

Heavenly Father, though sorrow and hardship darkens our lives, help us to look up to you, remembering the cloud of witnesses by which we are surrounded. And grant that we on earth, rejoicing ever in your presence, may share with them the rest and peace which your presence gives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

Chris

LOOKING AHEAD:

9.27 | Philippians 1:27-30
The Way of Apprenticeship

10.4 | Philippians 2:1-4
The Way of Unity

10.11 | Philippians 2:5-11
The Way of Lordship

10.18 | Philippians 2:12-18
The Way of Love

10.25 | Philippians 2:19-30
The Way of Friendship

11.1 | Philippians 3:1-11
The Way of Worship

11.8 | Philippians 3:12-4:1
The Way of Citizenship

11.15 | Philippians 4:2-9
The Way of Leadership

11.22 | Philippians 4:10-23
The Way of Stewardship

The Way of Hardship

Study For The Week of 9.20 | Philippians 1:12-26

Through the prism of my tears I have seen a suffering God. It is said of God that no one can behold his face and live. I always thought this meant no one can see his splendor and live. A friend said perhaps it meant that no one could see his sorrow and live. Or perhaps his sorrow is his splendor.

-Nicholas Wolterstorff

Look to the Scriptures

- Open in prayer ask God to for wisdom to discern, for eyes to see and ears to hear.

Look to the Text

- What's happening in this passage?
 - What are the hardships that Paul is facing? How does Paul talk about his trials? Is he ignoring them, stoically enduring them, avoiding them? How is his hardship limiting his calling as a missionary?
- Cross - Philippians teaches us what it looks like to take up our cross and follow Jesus (Matt. 16:24-28). How does Paul's understanding of hardship coincide with Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow him? What does this passage teach you about the reality of hardship in your life? How does Paul's faith and joy in suffering differ from ways we usually endure seasons of hardship? Can you share some times when hardship brought clarity to your life?
- Community - Philippians teaches us how we as a church can care for one another in the midst of hardship. It also shows us that we are called to endure hardship together. How does the church sustain and encourage Paul during his hardship? What are ways that we are called to sustain and encourage one another during times of hardship? Share some examples.
- New Creation - Paul's hope is not diminished by his imprisonment. He has both 'near-term' hopes (he wants to see the Philippians) and 'far term' hopes - to live is Christ and to die is gain. How does the promise of Jesus' resurrection and the new creation of his kingdom shape both of Paul's 'near-term' and 'far-term' hopes?

Listen to one another

- Consider sharing places where you are facing hardship in this season of your life.
- Or pray a version of the Examen such as sharing the following:
 - Consolation: A time in the past week where you felt close to God.
 - Desolation: A time in the past week where you felt far from God.
 - Looking ahead: What are you looking forward to or most worried about in the coming week

Pray

- Spend time praying for one another and our world incorporating both what you have studied and prayer requests in your time of prayer.

Practice

- Paul encourages the Philippians in Phil 4:9 to “practice these things”, so take this time over the next few weeks on 1 or 2 spiritual practices that you would like to work on. It could be something you are currently doing or a new practice you want to take up. You can do this as a group together or as individuals, but consider how you can practice the way of Jesus together during this time. Some suggestions: Daily Scripture reading, keeping Sabbath, fixed-hour prayer, memorize Philippians 2:5-11 together, etc. Talk about how what you have discussed in your group might help your daily/weekly practices.

Consider how these practices might prepare and equip you during hardships you are facing or will face. This might also be a good way to choose a practice if you haven't already. What practice(s) will sustain you and draw you closer to Christ during seasons of hardship?