



COUNTER CULTURE

ARMY



SERIES COMPANION

SAMPLE

COUNTER CULTURE ARMY – A CALL TO ARMS FROM PHILIPPIANS

Do you ever slip into thinking that church is like a holiday resort? That the community you're part of exists to serve you and to meet all your needs? That the most important thing about church is your comfort and satisfaction? Or your spiritual growth? It's easy to slip into that pattern of thinking because its the pattern we hear over and over again from advertisers who are trying to sell us stuff. Those advertisers, however, just want our money. Resorts only serve you because they want to get something from you, something that's more valuable to them than what they are giving you.

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi is a call to a radical way of thinking about church. Church is not a holiday. Church is not a business that exists to meet your needs – or take your money. The church is a community brought together by God, through Jesus, united for a purpose. United to stand together. United to advance. United as an army. Not an army that fights like the armies of the world, or the armies of the Roman world, but an army that fights like its general. Jesus. Counter culturally.

The call to arms in Philippians is a call for us to come together, not for our own sake, but for the sake of others. To come together to give – to give everything – as we serve God's mission. Entering the church is not a commercial exchange where we hope the people we're giving for – the people around us in church and in our city – will give us something in return, but in the hope that we might give them something priceless. Something we've already been given. Citizenship in God's eternal kingdom. Citizenship that comes through Christ. Citizenship that comes with a call to arms to join Jesus and fight for his cause.

The call to arms in Philippians is a call to think of church like an army, not a resort. To think of the people in your church community as fellow soldiers. Brothers and sisters in arms. It's a call to be united. Because nothing kills an army faster than disunity and desertion. It's a call to serve together. Paul addresses this letter to the church, together, calling the church to be the church together. Philippians is one of those letters where English translations can't quite convey everything that is going on. It's loaded with military

language and imagery, and importantly, when Paul says “you,” in Greek, he’s saying “youse” or “y’all” – its a call to come together to infiltrate our city, and our world, as citizens of somewhere else. Soldiers from another culture. Citizen soldiers of God’s kingdom.

Will you hear the call? Are you ready to receive some marching orders from Jesus - the commander who leads by laying down his life? Are you ready to follow Jesus together by living like he lived now, so that you might share the future his victory has already secured? The war is over. Our commander has already won. Will you join the battle?

THIS IS OUR CALL TO ARMS.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11

BETRAYAL! WAR! TRAGEDY!

THE BACKGROUND TO THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

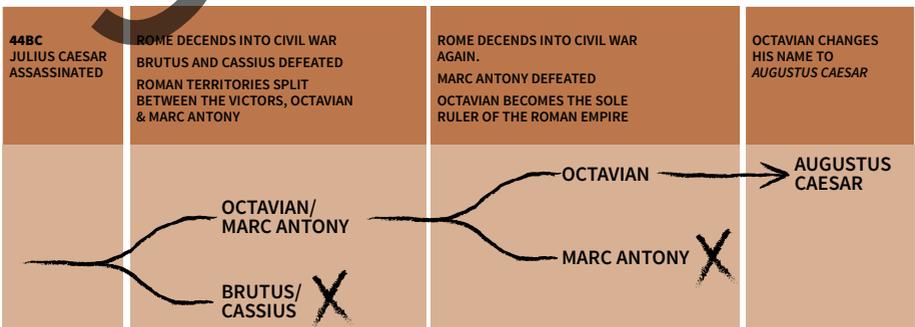
As we'll discover across this term, the letter to the Philippians is full of military references and imagery. Unless we have served in the military, this imagery will probably be unfamiliar, but Paul uses it for a reason. Philippi's location and history mean that the people who live there think in a particular way, they communicate using particular metaphors and they understand a particular culture. Paul uses that shared culture to get his message across. He calls followers of Jesus – citizens of his kingdom – to become part of a different sort of army. A counter-cultural army... shaped by Jesus' victory at the cross. Together.

WAR

Philippi was a city in Macedonia in northern Greece which was conquered by the Romans in 168 BC. It became the site of one of the most important battles in Roman history, the outcome of which would change the course of Rome and really, history itself.

After Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, Rome descended into civil war. The army was split into two forces: those supporting the assassins Brutus and Cassius (who wanted Rome to be a republic led by the senate); and those loyal to Julius Caesar's heirs, Octavian and Marc Antony (who wanted to maintain control).

Octavian and Marc Antony won the battle and routed the forces of





Brutus and Cassius. They split Rome's territories between them. Peace did not last and they turned on each other. The end of one civil war led to the start of another. Eventually Octavian defeated Antony, became the sole ruler of Rome, and changed his name to Augustus Caesar.

SETTLEMENT

After they defeated Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, Octavian and Marc Antony settled some of their veteran soldiers in the town.

However things became more complicated fifteen odd years later when Octavian, now Augustus, became emperor and settled even more of his veteran soldiers in Philippi. He also evicted the soldiers who'd been loyal to Brutus and Cassius from Rome and settled them in Philippi as well. So now the population of Philippi was largely made up of ex-soldiers who'd fought against each other in a bloody civil war.

COLONIES & CITIZENSHIP

The other thing Augustus did was make Philippi a Roman colony. As a

colony Philippi was seen as a little Rome planted in a different country. The Roman Empire split people into two categories: citizens and strangers. Being a citizen was a prized goal because citizens had special status, privileges and responsibilities under Rome, but most people in the Empire were left as strangers. As a colony, the Philippians were not seen as strangers, they were given the status of citizens.

One of the purposes of Roman colonies was to transplant Roman culture into another country. As the citizens of the colony lived out Roman culture within the culture of that country, the hope was that it would spread out, infiltrate, and influence the culture of that country. The Philippians were apparently incredibly proud of their identity and status as citizens of Rome in Macedonia.

ENTER PAUL, EUODIA, AND SYNTYCHE

This conflicted history must have had a massive impact on the inhabitants of Philippi, many of whom would've been, if not the veteran soldiers themselves, then their children and



grandchildren. It was also the history of the people in the church in Philippi. It's important to know about because Paul draws on it when he writes to the church. The letter is full of army language. The Philippian civil war might have been history but Paul has another civil conflict in mind when he writes to the church.

In 4:1-3 Paul addresses two women in particular, Euodia and Syntyche.

He says these two women used to contend at his side for the gospel but are now not of the same mind - they're disagreeing about something. Exactly what they're disagreeing about isn't the issue for Paul (which means they're not arguing about the truth of the gospel, which is always an issue for him). The issue is that they were once contending at his side for the gospel, but now are divided.

These studies take the view that this conflict between Euodia and Syntyche is not an afterthought which Paul addresses at the end of the letter, but rather a major conflict in the church which is behind the entire letter to the Philippians. There are a number of links between 4:1-3 and 1:27-30, which seem to bookend the main part of the letter, telling the church to stand united and contend for the cause of the gospel together. They seem to have been two significant and active people in the church whose disagreement is drawing in everyone else.

It's for that reason that Paul's letter is filled with military references, that see the church as an army that needs to stand together to achieve its goal, but which in the case of Philippi has turned against itself in a civil war. He draws on the imagery of this army being citizens together, not of Philippi but of heaven; citizens of heaven living outside of heaven, whose purpose is to influence the foreign culture of this world with the way they live together.

IS ALL THE ARMY LANGUAGE REALLY NECESSARY?

Some people may find the many army references in the studies, and the letter itself, difficult. They can certainly bring many negative connotations with them such as violence and aggression. How should we respond to them if we feel that way?

Firstly, the language is vitally important for conveying two fundamental ideas about the Christian life, ideas which we're often prone to downplay; the first being that the Christian life is a struggle. The world stands in opposition to Jesus and fights against his rule. Christians are heading towards a destination but right now are in the trenches. The second is that we're not in the trenches alone. Many of us default to reading a letter like Philippians as individuals first, but it's actually written to the church as a whole. We need to stand together with a common goal like an army must.

Secondly, it's important to keep in mind how Paul uses the language and how he doesn't use it. In 1:27-30 Paul talks about God's army standing together in the face of opposition. But God's army doesn't stand together aggressively. It doesn't try to overcome the world by violence. In fact it doesn't try and overcome the world at all. That is our culture's way of doing things, but God's army is a Counter Culture Army.

Paul never talks about attacking or fighting anyone ever. Instead God has overcome the world by the cross of Jesus. And the way God's army presses on to its goal is to stand together in suffering at the hands of an opposing world. God's Counter Culture Army stands as one trusting in Jesus, hoping in him and holding out his saving message to the world. ■

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THESE STUDIES:-

- Come to church and hear the teaching (both in word and song)
- Hear the talk on-line
- Do Grow Daily on your phone, on the City, or at creekroad.org.au
- Have a go at answering the questions
- Come ready to share at Growth Group

A COUNTER CULTURE ARMY: YOUR MARCHING ORDERS

It's all well and good to use military language and to talk about "you" being corporate. But what does this mean for you (singular). How will you be part of you, the counter-cultural army of Jesus, here in your church?

We often speak about our horizontal pathway - Connect, Grow, and Serve - leading to the growth of a servant heart. It would be easy to hear about this pathway and think it's a journey you walk as an individual. But it's not. The journey towards servant hearts is one that we walk together, and one that we walk for one another. In the Church (and according to Philippians) you can't connect with yourself, you can't grow by yourself, you can't serve yourself. And a heart that beats for its own sake alone is not a servant heart. These things are all things we do together. In relationship. With each other. For each other, and for those around us we hope to 'conquer' as part of God's counter-cultural army. This

conquest doesn't look like any other military conquest. It looks like servant hearted love. Giving ourselves up for the sake of the other. Just like our commander did.

When you hear the word "serve" this series don't think "what can I do?", think "what can we do?" Our marching orders as members of this army are orders we follow together. We stand together. We strive together. We serve together. We give together. Our Serve teams, from across our campuses, have pulled together a huge list of serve opportunities for this term. Not things we want individuals to do, but jobs that we're asking our Growth Groups to tackle together. Your Growth Group leaders have had a chance to sign your group up for these jobs. But this isn't the limit to how you can serve God's army, the church, or how you can reach the city and the world. Your marching orders are to be creative. To look for ways to serve one another, together. We hope this will ultimately lead to more people being keen to serve with servant hearts, in different ministries around our

church, but we also would love to see people finding new ways to grab a few “fellow soldiers,” see a need in our community, hear the command to love

and lay down our lives, and as part of this new army take steps to provide a loving, counter-cultural, solution. Will you join us? Will you join Jesus? ■

HOW THESE STUDIES WORK

These growth group books are **servants not masters**. They’re written to be an open door to discussion, not a straight-jacket to constrain discussion.

So as usual each study begins with space to promote discussion from the bible talk and *Grow Daily* and if you never move beyond those two questions that’s OK, so long as you’re talking about God’s Word and how it should shape our lives.

The rest of the questions are also written to get people talking in order to grow; they’re not a checklist of boxes to tick off. Growth group members or leaders might respond to a particular question with follow up questions that take up the whole study. The main thing to remember, however, is that the purpose of discussing isn’t to just learn head information, but rather to discuss how the cross of Jesus should change us.

The questions each week are separated into Head, Heart and Hands sections. Put simply:

Head questions want us to understand what the passage is saying.

Heart questions want us to apply what the passage is saying to our inner selves.

Hand questions want us to apply the change God’s word makes to our external lives.

Lastly and most importantly, these Growth Group booklets won’t themselves produce growth in us, and in fact neither will discussion itself. Instead, it’s God’s Spirit who causes growth in his people through his people lovingly speaking his word to each other in faith. So the first and most important part of any discussion will be depending on God in prayer together. ■

THE ONE WHO MADE US ONE

The church is a diverse bunch of people. We come from all sorts of backgrounds. Frankly, churches are full of people who are very different from one another. It's not uncommon for people to show up to church, take a look around, and feel like this isn't really the place for them. Like they don't fit in. Like there's no one else like them here; or at least, not enough similarly-minded people to bother sticking around. Worse than that, churches are often full of people who fight with one another. Maybe not with fists, but often with words. And most often with thoughts – mental arguments; philosophical disagreements; even just feeling generally annoyed at the way things are. Creek Road is no exception.

What would it take to unite the church?

What would it take to unite Creek Road?

The good news is that Jesus is the one who unites us, his people. Jesus is the one who unites his church. Jesus is the one who unites Creek Road. And in fact, whether we realise it or not, he's already done it by his blood shed on the cross. The gospel of Christ unites us as one. Our responsibility is to live lives worthy of the gospel, in light of what Christ has already

done for us, and together to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It's in that sense that the church is a bit like an army. We're a diverse bunch of people, gathered together by the victory of our King, serving together side by side for the cause of the gospel. There is no place for turf wars in the army; and there is no place for them in the church. Jesus by his sacrificial death has already made us one – even a people as diverse as us, many who might even feel like there is no place for them. Jesus has made us one. So now we need to work out that unity in the way we live and relate to one another.

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.
(Philippians 1:27)*

The One Who Made Us One was written by Trevor Hodge, Peter Yock & Steve Cree as the theme song for Creek Road's Term 4 2015 series, 'Counter Culture Army: A Call to Arms from Philippians'. Why not come along and join us?

Gathered as one we stand
United by Christ, our Lord
Once people with different minds
Now children of God
With the mind of Christ
Our humble Saviour
Who gave his life
Poured out in selfless love

Rejoice! Rejoice!
The King who reigns on high
Is Servant of us all
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Citizens of heav'n
Come bow before the Son
The One who made us one

Together we stand in Christ
Firm in the grip of grace
Once people who gave no light
Now shining like stars
With the light of Christ
Our glorious Saviour
Who gave his life
To conquer darkness

Rejoice! Rejoice!
The King who reigns on high
Is Servant of us all
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Citizens of heav'n
Come bow before the Son
The One who made us one
The One who makes us one

Together as one we strive
Struggling for Christ, our Lord
Serving him side by side
Suff'ring with joy
Pressing on
With fear and trembling
To live is Christ
To die is glory

Rejoice! Rejoice!
The King who reigns on high
Is Servant of us all
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Citizens of heav'n
Come bow before the Son
The One who made us one
The One who made us one
The One who made us one
The One who makes us one

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Peter Yock, Trevor Hodge & Steve Cree



*Listen online, watch
the lyric video,
download the mp3,
and free sheet
music*



God has changed the world through Jesus by gathering the church, as his army of soldier citizens, who serve him by advancing his counter-culture.

1

OPENED HEARTS

NOTES FROM GROW DAILY

SAMPLE

NOTES FROM SUNDAY

SAMPLE

DISCUSSION

1. What impacted you from the bible talk this week?
2. What impacted you from *Grow Daily* this week?
3. Share with the group some of your goals/objectives in life. Do you feel you are successfully achieving your goals/objectives in life? How do you feel knowing you may not be able to fulfil these?

READ PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

HEAD

4. Have a look at the introductions to Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Colossians and Thessalonians. How do they compare with the introduction to Philippians vs. 1-2. Is anything unique in Philippians?

5. **Keeping in mind the 'you' addressed to the Philippians is plural, what is God's good work in them in this passage?**

6. **In v. 6 & 7 the phrase 'carry it on to completion' has a military flavour of completing objectives; as does 'defend'. What is this army's objective?**

7. **How does Paul feel about them in vs. 3-8? Why?**

8. **What is Paul's prayer for the Philippians in vs.9-11? What might an Australian expect Paul to ask God for them?**

HEART

9. Write down a couple of your life goals.

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What motivates your goals?	How might the picture of the army influence your goals?	How might the cross influence your goals?
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HANDS

10. What is one concrete step the group can take to help me towards this goal?

SAMPLE



RESORT VS ARMY

When we're called to join God's counter culture army, we're called to advance the Gospel together. How can we do that if we treat church like a resort, where we consume, but never serve?

PRAYER

SAMPLE



BIG IDEA

All followers of Jesus are saved to serve on God's team.

BIBLE READING

Philippians 1:1-11

ALL AGES

Think of something we do that has to be done in a particular order. For example:

- Putting on shoes and socks (socks first);
- Making a pizza (you need the base before the toppings);
- Planting a tree (you need to dig a hole before you put in the seed/seedling);

Can you think of more examples (maybe for each person in your family)?

When someone believes in Jesus and what he has done for them, we are part of God's team. This means being part of God's work. In this passage Paul thanks the Philippians for their 'partnership in the gospel'. They are saved to serve. It is the same with us. God changes our hearts to be more

like Jesus and makes us partners in the gospel. But we need to make sure the order is right. We are part of God's team **FIRST, THEN** we serve with all we have. We cannot earn our way onto God's team through work. God has given us **GRACE** – the undeserved gift of being part of his team through Jesus. Because of **GRACE** we can serve God. We are saved to serve.

PRAYER

Stand in order of height, or order of birthdays in the year. Thank God that he is a God of order, and has given us grace first so we can serve him. Pray that we can know ways to serve God the best we can.

At Creek Road we love Jesus. We want to reach the city and reach the world with the good news about who Jesus is. We'd love to help you meet Jesus as we explore the Bible together at our Sunday Services.

We want every person to have a chance to connect with Jesus, to grow to be more like Jesus and to serve Jesus. So we try to make everything we do clear and easy to understand.

If you've got any questions, we'd love to answer them. If there is anything you need, we'd love to help.

You don't need to be good, religious, or have it all together to join us on a Sunday. Jesus is for everyone — people of all stages, ages, and places. So is our church.

Everyone is welcome. Seriously.

SERIES COMPANION TEAM

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Ben Webb
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Counter Culture Army

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