

Counter Culture Army Grow Daily

Week 1 Day 1

Philippians 1:1-11, Acts 16:9-12

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

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⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. – Acts 16:9-12



Time management is a big industry these days – how to get your priorities in order and stick to them. I've never found the time to get along to these seminars, but here's an interesting illustration I heard from one.

The presenter pulled out this huge wide-mouthed jar and then started filling it with about a dozen fist sized rocks. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks could fit, he asked, 'is this jar full?' Everyone said, 'yes.' Then he added some gravel and shook it down into the jar. He asked, 'is this jar full?' Everyone said, 'maybe.' Then he added some sand and shook it down into the jar. He asked, 'is this jar full?' Everyone said, 'probably not.' Then he poured some water into the jar...

The presenter asked, 'What's the point of this illustration?' One keen person said, 'the point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things into it.' 'No', the speaker replied, 'that's not the point, the truth this illustration teaches us is this: if you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all.'

What are the 'big rocks' in God's plan? What is his biggest priority? Churches can easily mess around with gravel and with sand yet somehow forget the biggest thing. Sometimes even good things can get in the way of the best thing, the most important thing.

The reason the church in Philippi got planted is because of Paul's clarity about God's priorities. What is most important to God is the preaching of the gospel. What people need most is the gospel. Notice that the Macedonian man Paul sees in his vision simply asks Paul to, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' But then notice what Paul concludes: 'that God had called us to *preach the gospel* to them.' The man didn't state his need. But Paul knew it: the gospel of Jesus. For Paul, God's orders could only be gospel orders. His marching orders were to march into Philippi with the gospel of Jesus. It's the gospel people need most. The gospel is God's priority.

Head: What is your core purpose in life? Is it shaped by the gospel of Jesus?

Heart: What good things might be clouding your heart from the best thing?

Hands: What 'Macedonian man moment' might you have today? Who might you truly 'help', by sharing the gospel with them or encouraging them in the gospel?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, please help me to be clear about your priorities in this world. Please help me to be clear about what this means for my core purpose in life. Please unclutter my heart. Thank you for the example of the Apostle Paul who knew so clearly that to really help someone was to share the gospel with them. By the power of your Spirit please help me to really help others today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [No Other Name](https://open.spotify.com/track/1Nt7a9zVtRsbW7Lm5XBKIE) <https://open.spotify.com/track/1Nt7a9zVtRsbW7Lm5XBKIE>

Steve Cree

Week 1 Day 2

Philippians 1:1-11, Acts 16:22-25

*1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ **because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,** ⁶ **being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

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²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. – Acts 16:22-25



I remember being with old Mr Brooks in the days before he died. He was in hospital, his health failing. But his instinct wasn't to pray for himself, but to sing hymns to God. He'd insist I read some

Scriptures to him. Great gospel passages like Ephesians 1 and Philippians 1. And then he'd sing. He'd sing hymns to God. And the sounds of his praise would float through the corridors of the hospital. Sometimes I'd join in – and it still didn't sound too bad. We sang from the heart.

I think Mr Brooks must have learnt that from Paul and Silas when they planted the church in Philippi – and ended up in jail. Here they are: raw backs, arms in chains, feet in stocks and what are they doing? They're praying! They're not praying in little whispers under the radar. They're not praying, 'Lord, I'm an Apostle, get me out of here'. They're praying and singing hymns to God!

The other prisoners are listening – a captive audience. Suddenly, there's an opportunity for them all to escape. You can read the whole story in Acts 16. There's an earthquake. Seems like it's right under the prison, because the foundations are shaking, the big iron bolts snap right out of the walls and the prison doors fly off their hinges.

Now imagine you're there – a prisoner – and the prison doors fly open! What's standard procedure here? I'm pretty clear about my core purpose at this point. Save my skin! Not Paul and Silas. What's their core purpose? They're worried about their jailer who is about to kill himself for failing in his duty. They say, 'don't harm yourself, we're all here!' The jailer falls trembling before them and asks, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they reply, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.'

Paul and Silas have been whipped, thrown into prison and are possibly facing death. Like old Mr Brooks. Yet they sing in the face of death. And they see their jailer as the one in chains. They care more about their jailer than their own freedom. That's counter-culture! They have something more important to do that get out of prison. Through the gospel of Jesus, they are truly setting people free.

Head: What truth of the gospel most makes you want to rejoice?

Heart: What truth of the gospel most moves your heart to share it with others?

Hands: How might you sing the gospel today? How might you point to true freedom in Jesus?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that the gospel enables us to sing in the face of death. Thank you that the gospel enables us to put the eternal needs of others before our temporary comforts. Thank you that the gospel enables us to see every situation as an opportunity to promote the gospel into others' lives. Help me please to live this counter-culture gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [Rejoice](https://open.spotify.com/track/7h0Zkx0oJdMoYjbsv2IsUh) <https://open.spotify.com/track/7h0Zkx0oJdMoYjbsv2IsUh>

Steve Cree

Week 1 Day 3

Philippians 1:1-11

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

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Right from the first verse of Philippians you can see how the gospel changes everything. You can see how counter culture the gospel is. Paul takes language from his culture and uses it in a very counter culture way. In fact, for the Apostle Paul, the gospel even changes how he says g'day!

First of all Paul describes himself and his co-author Timothy as SLAVES. The translation 'servants' is underdone really. Yes – they're servants of Christ Jesus – they're on His Majesty's service. But Paul uses a stronger word which means 'slaves'. As the Philippian jailer found out (Grow Daily yesterday), to be a slave of Jesus is to be truly free. We were slaves to sin and death but as slaves of Jesus – slaves to freedom and life!

The second counter culture part of Paul's greeting is what he calls the people he's writing to. He calls the Christians in the church of Philippi SAINTS – translated here as 'holy people'. In the Old Testament, Israel were God's saints – God's holy people – God's counter culture people. Now it's all people who trust in Jesus who are God's special possession. We are God's counter culture people,

called to live different lives right in among the world. And we didn't become saints by doing miracles but by the miracle of the cross – Jesus' blood making us God's special possession.

There's one more counter culture twist in Paul's greeting – the twist on the word 'PEACE' in verse 2. Peace wasn't first thought of in the 1960s. It was a standard 1st Century greeting: 'Peace!' But again Paul turns the standard greeting into a gospel greeting. He doesn't just say 'peace.' He says, 'grace and peace.' As those who trust in Jesus we have real peace. As a colony of Rome the Philippians loved to celebrate the peace the Roman Emperor brought. Paul reminds them of the greater peace the King of Kings has brought. Eternal peace is ours in Jesus.

What a greeting! It points to the wonderful greeting we'll receive in heaven because of Jesus.

Head: Would you describe yourself as a slave of Christ Jesus? Why/why not?

Heart: Think of a time when another person has extended grace and peace to you – how did you feel?

Hands: How can you bring God's grace and peace to others in your life this week?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you have called me to true freedom as Christ's slave. Thank you that you have made me one of your holy people by your grace. By the work of your Spirit, please help me to embody your grace and peace more and more, so that I might extend it to those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [Love Changes Everything](https://open.spotify.com/track/0sEIS8j9hjbhCFbwuixk1e)
<https://open.spotify.com/track/0sEIS8j9hjbhCFbwuixk1e>

Steve Cree

Week 1 Day 4

Philippians 1:1-11

*1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to **all** God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, **together with** the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to **you** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for **all of you**, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of **your partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in **you** will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about **all of you**, since I have **you** in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, **all of you share** in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for **all of you** with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that **your love** may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that **you** may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

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How many ewes do you see in the picture above?

One of Australia's leading sporting figures when I was growing up was boxer Jeff Fenech, with his trademark expression, 'I love youse all.' The English teachers among us perhaps cringe at that. But Jeff had a point. He didn't just love one of you. He loved all of you. He loved youse all.

Susan Butler, editor of the Macquarie Dictionary wrote about the 'youse' word in her book 'The Aitch Factor'. Defending its inclusion in the Macquarie Dictionary. She says, "I like to joke that I am like the woman with the mop and bucket who comes along to clean up after the party is over... Over the years the editors of the Macquarie Dictionary have occasionally been taken to task by people who feel we have let the side down by including the word "youse" in the dictionary... The defence of

youse is constructed as follows. Since we abandoned the singular thou we have felt the need for some way of differentiating between you as a singular pronoun and you as a plural pronoun.”

We’re not going to use the word “youse” or “y’all” language too much as we work through Philippians – but this plural concept of “you all” is crucial. Almost all of the exhortations in Philippians are plural – it’s ‘ALL OF YOU’ being talked to, not just individuals. Paul’s intent is for the letter to be applied by the Philippian church corporately, not as isolated individuals. We should read it the same way, applying the letter to our life and mission together as a church.

As we read on In Philippians, we’ll notice this “you all” language everywhere (as in the bolded words above). We’ll also notice that it’s very striking when Paul changes to using individual pronouns – when he means “one you” not “all of you.” He refers to four individuals positively: Jesus, himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. But he refers to two individuals negatively: Euodia and Syntyche (“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” – Philippians 4:2). This draws focus, as we’ll see, to how damaging the conflict between these two women is for the whole church. They’re breaking up the ‘we’. They are destroying the ‘us’, the corporate group. They are a threat to the unity of the Philippian church. They are a warning to us.

Head: Can you picture this passage being read out for the first time to the church at Philippi? Can you picture yourself among God’s people hearing it?

Heart: What do you enjoy most about being part of God’s corporate church? What do you find hardest about it?

Hands: What can you do differently this week to better express your identity as part of the body of Christ?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Please forgive me that I so easily lose sight of who I truly am as one of your people. By your Spirit, please grant me a heart that truly loves your people, and rejoices the privilege I have to be part of the body of Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [The One Who Made Us One](https://open.spotify.com/track/628vX5pUkjBPGZh4lp8YMu)
<https://open.spotify.com/track/628vX5pUkjBPGZh4lp8YMu>

Steve Cree

Week 1 Day 5

Philippians 1:1-11

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all **God's holy people** in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will **carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or **defending** and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the **glory and praise of God**.

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"I want you" was the call of Uncle Sam, recruiting civilians for the U.S. army. Uncle Sam (initials U.S.) is a personification of the American government. Uncle Sam wants you in the army. The Government wants you in their army.

Long before Uncle Sam, this sort of military language would be quite familiar in Philippi. The city of Philippi was founded as a Roman military colony in 42 BC, directly following one of the largest battles of ancient history, the civil war battle of Philippi.

Paul is writing to address civil war *in the church* at Philippi! They've dragged their local history of civil war into their relationships in the church. He writes to challenge this division. He writes to call for unity. His whole letter climaxes with the call, "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord" – Philippians 4:2. He says that these women "contended at my side in

the cause of the gospel” – Philippians 4:2. They used to fight side by side for the gospel. Now they’re fighting each other, which is deadly for the cause of the gospel.

Paul has his own version of Uncle Sam’s “I want you”. This call is based on something bigger than the U.S. Government or the Roman Government. This is the government of God. This is the army of God. He has called you – *you all* – to unity. He has called you – made you – his holy people (verse 1). He has made you one.

God has made you an army – united in the cause of the gospel. He calls you to partnership in the gospel (verse 5). He calls you to defend the gospel (verse 7). He won’t go AWOL, but will see you through in this calling (verse 6). For this cause is bigger than the glory of Rome – this cause is the glory of God (verse 11). The cause – the cause of the gospel of Jesus – is definitely worth fighting for!

Head: What things are you allowing to cause division between you and a Christian brother or sister, instead of unity in the cause of the gospel?

Heart: How does it make you feel that God himself would implore you to put your own issues aside for the cause of his gospel, that others might know him better?

Hands: What steps do you need to take this week to work towards reconciliation with your partners in the gospel?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, please forgive me that I allow my own interests to hamper unity with my co-workers in Christ. By your Spirit, please help me to remember the spiritual battle that I am in the midst of. Please grant me a heart that cares more for your honour, and the salvation of those around me who don’t know you, than my own self interests. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [The One Who Made Us One](https://open.spotify.com/track/628vX5pUkjBPGZh4Ip8YMu)
<https://open.spotify.com/track/628vX5pUkjBPGZh4Ip8YMu>

Steve Cree

Week 1 Day 6

Philippians 1:1-11

*1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ **In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy** ⁵ **because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,** ⁶ **being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.** ⁷ **It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.** ⁸ **God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.** ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

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Paul calls the Philippians “partners” in the gospel. They’re not gospel spectators, they’re gospel partners. They’re not hobby Christians but full-time participants in God’s mission. They’re definitely not black-hole Christians, sucking life from others, but giving as Jesus has given to them. They’re not resort dwellers. They’re members of God’s counter culture army.

Paul calls them partners. He calls them ‘partners’ in the gospel in verse 5. And the word ‘share’ in verse 7 is actually this same ‘partnership’ word. They share in confirming and defending the gospel. They’re fully part of God’s mission. They’re gospel partners. They didn’t just ‘become’ Christians some day in the past. They’re to be living and growing as Christians, each and every day in the present.

As followers of Jesus, we also are partners in the gospel. We are members of God's counter culture army. Being a Christian isn't just one more membership card wedged between your Supermarket Rewards card and your café loyalty card. It's a banner over your whole life.

It's always interesting at the Olympics when the sponsors call themselves official "partners". When the main event comes however, it's not the sponsors on the field. They're not true partners. They're spectators. They're watching the action unfold from the corporate box. Not so with partnership in the gospel! We're on the field – the battlefield – contending for the cause of the gospel.

With the gospel of Jesus, 'partners' isn't just a nice tag – it's real.

Head: Who are you currently partnering with for the cause of the gospel?

Heart: How does it make you feel that you are not alone in this work? How does it make you feel that God himself is at work in you?

Hands: What can you do this week to encourage and affirm those you work alongside in the cause of the gospel?

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy of working in partnership for the gospel. Thanks especially for Thank you for the promise that you are also at work in us, bringing to completion the work you have begun in our lives. Please help me to continue to rejoice in your people and share in your grace with them until Christ returns. In Jesus' name, Amen.

A song to listen to: [Love Changes Everything](https://open.spotify.com/track/0sEIS8j9hjbhCFbwuixk1e)
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