

# Philippians - Lesson 1

## Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Philippians 1:1-11

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**Bruce:** Good morning, men!

**Men:** Good morning, Bruce!

**Bruce:** We'll see how well I do today. I've got to move around a little bit. Don, do you want to set the tone for us, please? (*Music*)

Righteous heavenly Father, there is a great deal of work that You need to do in our lives to make us acceptable vessels in Your sight, that we might be the salt and the light of the world, to show our good works before You to testify about Your grace in our lives. Father, we just pray that if there are needs that are not being met, that You would do that today in our study, that You would be pleased to have Your Holy Spirit descend upon us, be amidst us, that we might sit at Your feet. Father, we just pray that You would open our eyes once again, that we might behold You for Christ's sake. And all the Brave Men said,

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Well men, we are going to start a new study in the book of Philippians. The last time we were together we studied Acts chapter 16, which was the founding of the church at Philippi. And the reason I wanted to use Acts chapter 16 as an introduction is because it gave us some good insights into the caliber of people who were in Philippi.

If you recall, we looked at Acts chapter 16 in light of the gracious and sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in preparing Paul and Timothy to go to Philippi, and also the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the lady Lydia.

Now the reason I wanted to do that was so you can get an idea of what was going to happen at the church in Philippi. So let's pick it up after that. We saw the introduction in Acts chapter 16. And last time we saw how the church was born in Philippi in Asia in Acts chapter 16.

Now there were three founding members of that church. The first one was Lydia. She was a prosperous merchant woman. God was pleased to open her eyes so that she could respond to the teaching of Paul.

The second was a demon-possessed girl who was used as a means of income by her owners, because they touted her possession by the spirit and used it for financial gain. So those are the first two founding members of the church at Philippi.

The third one was the local county jailer. He'd been gripped by the Holy Spirit. He came to the point of asking in his life, "What do I need to do to be saved?" Paul was there and led him to Christ.

And so those are the three founding members you have of that church. You have an entrepreneurial woman, a demented girl, and you have a local county jailer. And God brought them all to saving faith. And so it's those three diverse people with whom we begin to look at the book of Philippians.

Now it's twelve years later and Paul writes this letter to this church that he started twelve years ago on one of his European visits. He wrote this epistle from jail also. And the two others that he wrote were Ephesians and Colossians.

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So the unique thing that I want you to see in Acts chapter 16 is how that church got started. And now we want to pick up twelve years after that church had been founded.

Now take a look at verse 14 of Philippians chapter 1. Let me read for you the first eleven verses. Philippians chapter 1, verses 1-11.

*“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from this first day until now. And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

*“It is right for me to feel this way about you, because I hold you in my heart. For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and in the confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory of God.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. Now take a look at verse 14. Let's go to the situation in which Paul finds himself. He's in prison, so he's writing this letter to the church that he founded twelve years previously.

Now most people think that Paul was an evangelist, and certainly he was. But I think he's more of a church planter. That was really his mission. It was to be a church planter. He's now writing to this church which he had founded twelve years ago on his first European mission.

Now the first thing I want you to notice in our passage is how he refers to himself. He refers to himself and Timothy as *“servants of Christ Jesus.”* He's not boasting about his merits. He's not boasting about his skills or his reputation, but he gladly wants to be known as a servant.

But he was not only a servant. But I also see him as a praying pastor. Not only is he a servant, but he's a praying pastor. Notice that he has them in his heart. Check out verse 7. *“It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart. For you are partakers with me of grace.”*

That's how Paul sees himself. And that's important for us to understand as we work our way through these passages. He sees himself as a submitted servant and a praying pastor.

Let me give you some historical background about this environment in which Paul finds himself. His circumstances were anything but joyful. He'd been arrested illegally. He'd been taken to Rome and was now awaiting trial.

There was division among the Christians there. You can look at chapter 1, verses 14-17.

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**Transcriber's Note:** Philippians 1:14-17. *“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry—not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.”*

**Bruce:** Paul is in prison, and the church that he had founded twelve years ago is in trouble because there were divisions among the congregation. Some people were trying to make matters worse for the apostle Paul. And so he's now confronting these issues as we find him in prison.

But the thing I notice is this, men. Look at this. How is he able to have such joy in such difficult circumstances? The people he loved were in trouble because of people trying to mess around with the doctrines of grace, adding works to it. He was also in prison. So how can he maintain such a spirit of joy?

I think the answer is found in what I would call *his single-mindedness*. Paul was single-minded. His concern was not for Paul. His concern was not for Timothy. His concern was for the gospel of Christ and the glory of God.

Now notice that five times in this chapter he mentions the gospel. Look at verse 5, verse 7, verse 12, verse 17 and verse 27. Five times in that one chapter he mentions the content of the gospel of grace. That was his real single-mindedness. It was the purity and clarity of the gospel.

Now Paul looked upon these circumstances as we're told in verse 13 as circumstances that were sent by God. He wasn't complaining. These were circumstances which God was pleased to put him into for God's glory and Paul's benefit, and then for the purpose of exalting Christ.

Now here's a man who's got a congregation that he established twelve years ago, having some difficulty with their membership. He's in prison. And he looks at the circumstances in which he finds himself with great joy, because the purpose is to exalt Christ Jesus.

Take a look at verse 20 in the passage. Let's take a look at verse 19. *“Yes, and I will rejoice! For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that this will turn out for my deliverance. So it is my eager expectation and hope that I would not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always, Christ will be honored in my body.”*

Here's a man who's in jail. His friends are in trouble. But he has great joy. He's got to be single-minded. He's not thinking about himself. He's thinking about the proclamation of the gospel and the glory of God.

We need to be single-minded, men, or those things around the world will eat us alive. He had a single mind. Had Paul been double-minded, what would he have been doing? Complaining like the rest of us, complaining because life is so uncomfortable.

And I want you to see the three areas of his single-mindedness. I think of three expressions that highlight the single-mindedness of the apostle Paul.

The first one is this. In verses 1-6 he says this. “I have you in my mind.” Then in verses 7 and 8, “I have you in my heart.” And then in verses 9-11, “I have you in my prayers.”

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Now where were Paul's people? They were in his mind, they were in his heart, and he was praying for them. Now I think that's a pretty good description of a pastor. If a pastor wants a job description, he needs to have his people in his mind, his congregation needs to be in his heart, and the people in his congregation need to be prayed for. I have you in my mind. I have you in my heart. And I have you in my prayers. That was the single-mindedness of the apostle Paul.

Now because of his single-mindedness, let's take a look at *the content and quality of his prayer life*. I indicated that not only was Paul church planter, but he was also a praying pastor.

Let's take a look at verse 3. I want you to see that the first characteristic of his prayer life was one of *thanksgiving*.

Now he prays with great thanksgiving in verse 3. "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.*" He's thanking Him for the spiritual growth at the church in Philippi. Remember, this is twelve years later, after he'd started the church.

Now let me ask you a question. This was twelve years later. He's now checking up on these people. And he looks at these people twelve years after he'd formed the church. And he's filled with great joy.

If somebody were to come back and take a look at your life twelve years after your conversion, would he or she have the same unlimited joy that Paul had for the people twelve years later at the church in Philippi? What would they see? Would they see a lot of spiritual growth? If a visitor came and said, "I knew you twelve years ago," and he would look at your life, would he be filled with joy and thanksgiving because he's seeing you grow in Christ?

That's exactly what Paul was doing. And we need to ask ourselves that same question. If somebody who led me to Christ saw me twelve years later, what would his response be? Would it be one of thanksgiving? Would it be one of joy? Is there evidence of spiritual growth in our own lives that would produce thanksgiving in this person, in this visitor?

Uninhibited thankfulness for a new zeal for God is what he saw in the church at Philippi. Is that what people would see in us? If somebody said, "I knew you twelve years ago. You're so different now." Would they have uninhibited joy by what they saw—spiritual growth in your life, more of an increase in Christlike character?

Now notice what he's thankful for. He's not necessarily thankful for numbers. Now there's nothing wrong with numbers in a church growth movement. There's nothing wrong with that. But what marks church growth is not new ideas. It's not new styles of worship. It's not new structures. It's not new music. But church growth is marked by *change in people's lives*. It's marked by change in people.

He gives thanks for what God is doing in their lives. He knows that God is the One who is doing it. That's why I wanted you to see Acts chapter 16 before we see Philippians chapter 1, so you'd understand the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in forming this church.

Now most commentators would say that the great theme of this book is *joy*. I would say that the great theme of this book, the book of Philippians, is *Christ*. He mentions

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Christ 17 times in chapter 1. Joy is the environment in which the book is written. But I think the real subject matter is about the Person and work of Christ.

So the first characteristic of Paul's prayer is one of thanksgiving. He's thankful for what God is doing in their lives, and he sees the evidence of that is Christlike character.

Then in verse 4 the second attribute would be this: one of *joy*, not only thanksgiving but joy. Take a look at verses 9-11. "*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*" That's what he's thankful for. That's what brings him great joy.

Notice those words—more love, more knowledge, more discernment, more excellence, more purity, more blamelessness. Those are the words that he says. That's what he saw in the people twelve years later after he started the church. And that's what brings him great joy.

Is that what people see in our lives, men? Do they see those words? Take a look at those words. More love, more knowledge, more discernment, more excellence, more purity, more blamelessness. You see, that's what causes God great joy in the fellowship of believers. When God sees that type of growth, that's what causes Him great joy.

But I also have to say that the other side of the coin is this, men. It causes God great grief when there is not this spiritual growth, and when there are signs of spiritual stagnation. When God does not see those words being developed in us, that causes Him great grief, because this is the hallmark of the fellowship of the church—spiritual growth and Christlike qualities. So joy is the atmosphere of the letter, and I think that Christ is the subject matter of the letter.

As we move through this passage, let's go to the next emphasis I think Paul describes for us. And it's this. He gives a very good picture of *the nature of a true Christian experience*. Now notice to whom he's writing in verse 1. "*To all the saints in Christ Jesus.*" He's writing to a group of people who are strong believers. And he describes for us a picture of the true Christian experience.

Notice verse 1. We are saints in Christ Jesus. Now we misuse that word a great deal. We generally refer to that as some sort of a moral quality. He's a real saint; she's a real saint—a certain standard of holiness we ascribe to a person. That's a misuse of that word *saint*. It's not the description of moral character. The word *saint* in the Scripture is used as somebody set apart for God. That's a saint.

And notice to whom he's writing. He's writing to whom? To the saints, to the people who are what? Set apart for God. Those are whom he's writing to. That's what a saint is—somebody set apart for God.

And friends, that's what's happening to you and me. When God was pleased to regenerate us through the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, He brought us into a position of being set apart for Him. And that's what has happened to you and me, if you are in Christ. He has purchased you and put His name on you.

When you go shopping, sometimes you see the item that you want, and you'll take it off the shelf. And you go up to the counter and you put it there. And you say, "I'm going

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to pay for this, but I'll come and get it later." And so you do the rest of your shopping. And then on your way out you come back and say, "I've put my name on that item and I paid for it."

That's exactly what Christ has done to us. If you're a saint in Christ, He has selected you, He has purchased you. He has paid for you by His death, burial and resurrection. And now you've been set apart for Him. You and I are saints, men. That does not mean that we should be proud and egotistically motivated. We ought to be very, very grateful that God has chosen us. Of all the things He could have done in this world, He has set us apart for His grace and for His glory.

You and I are saints. And the first thing that Paul wants us to remember is this. You are saints in Christ Jesus. That's who God says we are.

Now I think that the real battleground for us, men, is Romans 12. "*Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.*" Who do we think we are? We need to think of ourselves as saints and servants, those who have been selected by God for His grace. He purchased us and set us apart for His glory. And now we have the opportunity to glorify Him just by having our lives increase in Christlike character.

The first thing Paul wants us to realize is this: that we are saints in Christ Jesus. He has singled you out, and you've been set apart for Himself. Yes?

**Participant:** That ties in nicely to verse 11, because oftentimes, whenever we look at being saints, we look at how good we have to be. Verse 11 talks about "*the fruit of righteousness*" that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. So we're saints not because of us, but because of Christ. We're righteous not because of us, but because of Christ. There's huge freedom and peace in that, so we can be instead of do.

**Bruce:** Amen. Well said. It's not what we do that makes us saints. It's what God has done to us that makes us saints. That's our starting point. And that's the basis of our life. And that's what Paul is so thankful for, because he's writing to a group of people who understand that they are saints in Christ Jesus. He has singled you out, and He has set you apart for His service.

Now the evidence is not that we are perfect in our conduct. But in our life you have all the marks of being set apart for Jesus Christ. And we'll see that in the rest of the chapters of this book. You'll see the marks of what it means to be set apart for Christ's service. It's not about fame. It's not about position. It's not about the things of this world. But it's about being set apart for Christ.

Let me ask you a question. One of the things that we often need to ask ourselves when we study the Scripture is what am I going to do about what I just learned? You just learned something about yourself if you're in Christ, if you're a saint in Christ Jesus. What are you going to do about that?

Are you content with having the name of Jesus marked by the character of your life, and not the things of this world? What characterizes your life, the things of this world or the fact that you realize that as a saint you've been set apart for His service?

So the first experience of every true follower of Christ is that we are saints in Christ Jesus.

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The second thing he teaches us is this. *We're secure in God's faithfulness.* Take a look at verse 6. Not only are we saints in Christ Jesus, but we're secure in God's faithfulness. *"And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*

Now men, that is one of the great verses of Christian assurance in all of the New Testament. *"And I am sure of this: that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."*

That's a summary statement of your life. It's a summary statement of my life. God affirms that God will complete all the things that He has in His heart for you, even up to the time when Christ returns. What He began in you He will complete in you.

Now Paul is saying that all true believers have this experience. Notice the two reasons for such confidence. Here's the reason that we can have confidence in the assurance of our salvation. First of all, this. *The initiation of all Christian experience lies with God.* Remember Lydia? God was pleased to open her eyes. She was a worshiper, but she was not a follower of Christ. She was not saved at that time. God was pleased to open her eyes so that she could respond to the apostle Paul, and she became one of the founding members of the church at Philippi. The initiative of all Christian experience lies with God. It is He who began a good work in you.

Who began the good work in you? It's not what you did; it's what He did to you. Lydia is a great example. Now certainly she committed herself to Christ and she believed. But that was not the ground of her salvation. The ground of her salvation was what God did to her in opening her eyes. He took the initiative in that. It's what God did to her.

It's the same with us. All true Christian experience begins with God.

Now I want to go a little bit deeper into this for a moment. I'm saying this, that Paul is teaching us that all true Christian experience begins with God. Let me remind us of the work of the Holy Spirit, based upon Acts chapter 16.

Look at John 3:6. It's an important verse for us to understand in this context. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* The Holy Spirit is the Author of the great work of regeneration, being born again. He takes up His abode in the renewed heart and lives in us as His temple. He dwells in us and shall be with us.

And notice this. *Jesus does all for us in our justification, and the Holy Spirit does all in us for our sanctification.* The Holy Spirit is the Source of all holy desires, consistent purposes and good works. There is no good thing in us but what the Holy Spirit produces. He dwells within us as the Teacher, the Comforter and the Advocate of the soul. He leads us into all truth.

Now we need to realize, men, that the Holy Spirit is the One who guides us into all truth. He starts a good work in us. And He gives us the great assurance that what God began in you He is going to bring to completion. God is not going to stop hounding you and working with you and pursuing you until He completes all the things He has in His heart for you, even up to the time when Christ returns. So it is what He did to us through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that God began His work.

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I'm reminded in John chapter 5 and John 8 that Jesus makes this statement. And here is the Son of God speaking. In John 5 and John 8 He says, "I initiate nothing on My own. I only do those things I see My Father doing. I only do those things My Father tells me to do." Here is the Son of God saying, "I don't initiate things." Who is the One who initiates it? God is the One who initiates it. And Jesus says, "I only respond to those things that I see God doing around Me."

Men, one of the great questions that you can ask yourselves every day is what is the Lord doing around me? Ask him to infer this. Give me the insight to see what You're doing around me so that I can join what You're doing. A lot of people go to start something and say, "God bless it." Then after five years it ends. I'd much rather say, "Lord, let me join what You've already started, because You're going to bring it to completion because You're the One who started it. And I know that it will be blessed because You are the One who initiated it."

Now that doesn't mean that you sit back on your butts and do nothing. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying to be sensitive to what the Lord is doing around you. Ask yourself the question. Lord, on this day, what is it that You're doing around me so I can join that which You've initiated, something that You will bring to completion?

One of the great verses of Christian assurance is verse #6. He began a good work in you, and He will bring it to completion in the day of the Lord Jesus. He never leaves His work half-done. He never leaves his work half finished. With God there are no such things as unfinished symphonies. (*Laughter*) You are not an unfinished symphony. Men, what God starts in you He is going to bring to completion because in His heart He has all the things He wants you and me to do, and what we need to be. And He is not going to stop until that is finished. He perseveres against us and with us and never gives up.

Now truly He may lead us through pain and difficulties. But He never stops perfecting us, to match that which is in His own heart for us, and to present us faultless before His ways.

Now notice. I've said several times that it's what's in God's heart. What He starts in His heart that He has for you He initiates, and He is going to bring that to completion. You may go through some difficulties, but one thing He is always going to do. He's refining us to become faultless and blameless before Him in the day of Christ. What He starts He's not going to let go unfinished. There are no unfinished symphonies.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** Is Paul not just referring to the church here, that He would bring the body of Christ to completion? Would you comment on para-church ministries? Is Paul just talking about the church, or anything that God—

**Bruce:** To whom is he writing?

**Participant:** The Philippians.

**Bruce:** There's more to it. There's a definition of this. "*To all the saints in Christ Jesus.*" That's to whom he's writing. Now where they are I don't know. But the people he's writing to are people who've had the truth of Christian experience through regeneration that I just walked you through. That's the people to whom he is writing. And



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he's saying that when you are truly in Christ Jesus,--to all the saints in Christ Jesus,--you have this common experience. And that is that you are saints and that you have confidence in God's faithfulness, because he's writing to all the saints, whoever they are at that particular time. Does that answer your question?

**Participant:** Yes, thank you.

**Bruce:** The third thing that I want you to notice is this. *They are partners in God's gospel.* Not only are they saints in Christ Jesus, confident in God's faithfulness, but they are partners in God's gospel. Notice who's gospel it is. It's God's gospel.

This word *partnership* is the same word that means *fellowship*. It's what people share in common. And what do we share in common? Look at verse 7. The grace of God in salvation. Verse 7. *"It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart. For you are all partakers, (or have fellowship with me), "of grace."* You have fellowship and are particular partners with me in grace. They were partners in the free offer of grace in the communication of the gospel.

Now notice verse 7. I want you to notice one thing about verse 7. They were not only embracing it, but they were also defending it, defending the gospel to keep it pure and to keep it truthful.

Now in chapter 3 we're going to spend a lot of time talking about what it means to defend the gospel. Friends, it is much easier to be a proclaimer of the gospel than it is to be a defender of it. And oftentimes we don't defend it because we just let it go by the wayside. In chapter 3 we're going to see the necessity of not only proclaiming the gospel but defending it, to make sure that it is clear and that it is pure.

Now take a look at verse 7. Notice the latter part of that verse. *"Because I hold you in my heart. For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense of the confirmation of the gospel."* Notice that we are defenders of the gospel content as well as proclaimers of the gospel content. It's much easier for us just to proclaim Christ than it is to try to defend Him. And we're going to talk a great deal in chapter 3 about what it means to be a defender of the purity of the gospel.

Now in my opinion, the real scandal of the church today is not that we worship in different buildings, or that we work with different styles of worship, or even that we have different church governments. The real scandal in my mind is that we're not preaching the same gospel. That's the real issue. To talk about all the other things is superfluous to that one thing. And that's the thing that Paul is going to drive home for us in this study of Philippians. We need to be defenders of the purity and the clarity of the gospel. And that's the real scandal of the church.

How are people going to know what to believe? We've got all kinds of gospels running around. We've got the health and wealth gospel. We've got the works gospel. We've got the gospel of grace. What are people going to believe when they hear different gospels preached? The real scandal in my mind, men, is that we're not preaching the same gospel. And that's the tragedy of what we have in our church today. People say, "How confusing! What should I believe?" We need to be very, very clear on what we teach and what we believe. And I'll spend a lot of time in chapter 3 when we come to those verses.

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So Paul describes himself as a *servant*. That was a foreign concept in Paul's culture—to be a slave and think that your will would not be fulfilled, but only the will of your master. Slaves did not have a will. I don't mean a written document stating what I am to do with my assets. That's not what I'm saying. They did not have a will. They did not think that they were motivated to do something for themselves. They were totally consumed with the will of their masters. They never even thought that they had their own will. They were strictly controlled by the motivation of what am I going to do to fulfill the will of my master?

Ask yourselves this question, men. Have you resigned all of your rights to Him because He is your Master and you are His slave? Have you resigned all of your rights to Him because it is His will that is to be fulfilled and not ours? We're going to spend a lot of time talking through the book of Philippians because Paul is going to teach us how to do that in the next couple of chapters.

I go back to verses 7 and 8 as a little summary statement. *"It is right for me to feel this way about you."*

How do you feel about each other in our men's group? Is it because *"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ?"* Do you see that in us? Do you see in each of us what God has begun and what God will complete? *"It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart. For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and my defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you with all the affection of Christ Jesus."*

Men, Paul saw himself as a servant. And it was his Master's will for him to be single-minded. If there is one thing that we need to learn from this lesson today, it is the need to be single-minded. We need to have each other in our minds. We need to have each other in our hearts. And we need to have each other in our prayers. And may it be so that we will be single-minded members of a movement, motivated for mercy by ministry in the marketplace. I found another m—single-minded. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** Go for it. *(Laughter)*

**Bruce:** Single-minded, mission-minded members of a movement, motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. Men, the great battleground we have is Romans 12. What's in my mind? It all starts there. As we go about studying this book of Philippians, may God give us the grace to have each other in our minds, to have each other in our hearts, and to be praying for each other for God's glory. May it be so for Jesus' sake.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Let's pray. Father, I just pray that the content of this message will override the presentation of it. It's really not about me, Lord; it's about You. And If I've said anything that's not consistent with Your glory and Your attributes, I pray that You'd remove it from our minds. Father, thank You for these men. We've been together for over twenty years now. I just pray, Lord, that we would develop a spirit of single-mindedness for Your glory and how we treat each other. And when people come to see this group, they would say that we are exuding the character of Christlikeness, because we are loving each other more and more with more discernment, more knowledge, more grace, more

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blamelessness and more purity. Father, we just pray that these would be the insights that people would see when they review us for all the time that we've been together. And most of all, Father, we just pray that You'd be glorified in who we are because of what You've done in us. And we know this, Lord. What You began in us, only You know what that is. And therefore You are the only One who can complete it. We thank You, Father, that we are not members of an unfinished symphony, but we're part of Your gracious navy of people who have been called to saving faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)