

What if... We Prayed for Others ?

Philippians 1:1-11

PPT Title

What if We Prayed for Others?

Main Point: God teaches us how to pray for the people we love.

Key Verse: *I pray that your love will grow more and more. And let it be based on knowledge and understanding.* - Philippians 1:9

Props: a letter, a bill, and junk mail; an unfinished craft (knitting, scrapbook, etc.)

INTRO

What if you went out to your mailbox and found several pieces of mail? **Hold them up.** One was an ad to buy something, one was a bill, and one was a letter from a friend, or maybe a cousin, that you haven't seen in a long time. Would you just toss that letter aside, or would you tear it open? We all love getting a personal letter from someone we care about. Today we're going to read a very special letter that Paul wrote to his dear friends. God actually gave him the words to write (2 Timothy 3:16).

BACKGROUND



Last week we learned all about God directing Paul to Philippi, where he told a woman about Jesus. Who Remembers her name? *Lydia*. Well, Paul couldn't stay in Philippi because God had many more places for him to travel. Some time later, Paul wrote a letter to some of his best friends that lived in Philippi. If people who live in America are Americans, what do you think we call people who live in Philippi? Philippians! So we can find Paul's letter in your Bible; it's called the book of Philippians.



You'll never guess where Paul was when he wrote this letter. Any guesses? He was in jail! Do you think Paul broke the law? No. Once again, some men who didn't follow Jesus—men who lived in the kingdom of darkness, apart from God—made up lies about Paul. Does this sound familiar? The same thing happened to Jesus (John 15:20). So Paul sat in prison in Rome, Italy. His friends in Philippi were about 700 miles away. This is about as far as Snellville is from Washington D.C. or Pennsylvania. Does anyone have grandparents who live there? It's hard to be away from people we love. Paul really missed his friends in Philippi, and we are about to learn why.

GIVING THANKS FOR MINISTRY PARTNERS



We, Paul and Timothy, are writing this letter. We serve Christ Jesus. We are sending this letter to you, all of God's people in Philippi. You belong to Christ Jesus. We are also sending this letter to your leaders and deacons. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. - Philippians 1:1-2

That's a nice greeting. So we know Timothy is with him. Paul almost always starts his letters by asking God to give grace and peace to the reader. That's because the grace and peace God gave to Paul changed his life! Now listen to this part:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. I am happy because you have joined me in spreading the good news. You have done so from the first day until now. - Philippians 1:3-4

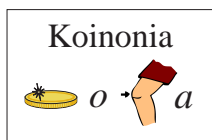
No wonder Paul prayed for his friends with thankfulness and joy! This verse says that his friends had joined him in spreading the good news of Jesus since the first day they met! Do you remember how the Holy Spirit led Paul to Philippi? As far as we know, when Paul and his friends arrived, no one on that *continent* knew about Jesus. But by the time Paul wrote this letter, there were tons of people who believed in Jesus and they were all helping to spread the good news!

Remember, God gave Paul the very special job of telling the Gentiles (that's all the people who are not Jewish) about Jesus. And that included millions of people, in Europe and everywhere! That's a BIG job! Wouldn't you be glad to have help?

Let's think of it like this. Call up a volunteer. What if I gave you the job of gently tapping every person in this room on the shoulder? Go ahead. **Allow child a minute to start this.** Ok, _____, come back up front. Now, what if I said you could have help? Everyone listen very carefully to my instructions. Let's say this time, as soon as you get a gentle tap, you can give a gentle tap to one or two of your neighbors. To keep things under control in here, you have to keep one foot planted where it is (**or stay in your seat. Use whatever works for your situation**). _____, our volunteer, will get us started. Gentle taps only!

Ask volunteer: Wasn't it much easier to get the job done when you had all this help? What if your job was to tap everyone in the world? Wouldn't you be thankful for this kind of help? Paul's job was to tell others about Jesus. First of all he was SO thrilled that more and more people were following Jesus because they had new hearts and new life. And he was so thankful to have help spreading the word. **Thank him or her.**

Say: Paul and these believers had become partners. It's like they were on the same team. Who here is on a team of some kind? A team all works together to accomplish the same goal. A football team works together to score the most points. A ballet team works together to perform a beautiful dance. In Paul's case, everyone on his team was working together to tell people about Jesus. You know, on a team, when one person does well, it's good for the entire team.



The Bible has a word for this kind of togetherness, friendship, and team spirit. It's Koinonia. I have this funny **slide** to help you remember it. Let's say it together. We see Koinonia in Acts 2:42, "The believers studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed." This is a community of people working together for everyone's good and for the growth of the kingdom.

GOD WILL FINISH WHAT HE STARTED



Paul had joy and peace because he was certain that God would make sure the job of spreading His truth would get finished. It's God's Spirit inside of the believers that helps them know who to talk to and what to say. All they do is follow His lead! And Paul is confident that there's nothing that can stop God from finishing the job.

I am sure that the One who began a good work in you will carry it on until it is completed. That will be on the day Christ Jesus returns. - Philippians 1:6

God is the only one who never quits, and never gives up. He never even runs late. He is so different from us! We run late, we get sick, we get tired, and we get bored with projects. There are many reasons we don't finish what we start. **Show an example of something you haven't finished, and explain why. (You got too busy, you ran out of materials, etc).** Ask: Who can share about something they started, but didn't finish?



Say: Friends, we can have joy because God is different. He never runs out of time or energy. Look at this seashell (**slide**). Does it look unfinished? Look at this picture of a sunset (**slide**). Doesn't it look complete? God finishes all good things.

Application: What if we were like Paul? What if we were absolutely certain that God would be with us and help us every step of the way when He gives us a task? In a very real way, that takes the pressure off of us. We just follow along and enjoy the adventure!

Paul continues:

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you. I love you with all my heart. I may be held by chains, or I may be standing up for the truth of the good news. Either way, all of you share in God's grace together with me. God can give witness that I long for all of you. I love you with the love that Christ Jesus gives. - Philippians 1:7-8

Paul says that no matter what he does, his friends share in God's grace with him. Do you see the koinonia there? What's good for one is good for all.

PAUL PRAYS FOR HIS FRIENDS

Next, Paul prayed for his friends. Why do you think he did that? (Listen for answers.) Bottom line, Paul prayed because he trusted that God was the source of all good things. Paul knew that God had the power to bless the ones he loved.

I pray that your love will grow more and more. And let it be based on knowledge and understanding. Then you will be able to know what is best. You will be pure and without blame until the day Christ returns. - Philippians 1:9-10



We see two things here. Paul wants their love to grow. The word for love here (ag-ah'-pay) is a love for others that puts them first—it's unselfishly doing what's best for someone else. Who do you know that loves like this - who usually puts *your* needs before *his* or *her* own needs? (Mom, Dad, Grandma) This kind of love can only come from God (1 Cor 13:1-13; Gal 5:22). This kind of love deepens the koinonia, and draws more and more people to want to be in God's kingdom.



And Paul also asked God to give his friends knowledge with understanding. You know, people can know lots of information without really understanding. But Paul wanted them to have wisdom—to see everything the way God sees it. For example: If anyone had known Paul when he was a young man, they would have known that he was very bold, very sure of himself, and extremely CRUEL to believers. In fact, most everyone who knew about Paul was afraid of him. People actually ran and hid from him. But what did God know? One day, Jesus would change Paul's heart completely and he would become a wonderful follower of Jesus. He would become a champion of telling people about the kingdom. In fact, God knew Paul would write much of the New Testament and we would be sitting here studying his words thousands of years later!

More than anyone, Paul believed in the importance of understanding things according to God's wisdom. When God gives us understanding, we can make the best choices and live the best life possible. This is what Paul wanted for his friends. Then Paul ended his prayer with this:

You will be filled with the fruit of right living produced by Jesus Christ. All of those things bring glory and praise to God. - Philippians 1:11



Who can tell me what the fruit of right living is? (Hint: we just spent the summer learning about this fruit!) When God fills you with His love and gives you His understanding, your life will be overflowing with awesome fruit like peace, joy, kindness, goodness and more. The cool thing is, we don't produce the fruit. God does! And when we live like that—loving and joyful, kind and peaceful—people think, "Wow. Those people are pretty awesome neighbors; they are great classmates and teammates. If that's the kind of life they live by following their King Jesus, then I'd like to know more about Him. That brings glory to Him!"

Application: Just like Paul had a group of friends who he shared Koinonia with, I bet everyone here has people who are important in your life. Think about who that might be. **Teacher, share a personal story of a group who you have had this relationship with.** So, just like Paul, we should thank God for them and continue to pray for them. (We'll talk more about this in Cluster group time.) Just like Paul, you can pray for their love to grow, for them to have great understanding, and for a bunch of fruit in their lives! And, just like Paul, when you pray all these blessings over the people you care about, and then you see God answer, your heart will be bursting with joy! That's how koinonia works!

PPT Main Point

Main Point: God teaches us how to pray for the people we love.

PPT Key Verse

Key Verse: *I pray that your love will grow more and more. And let it be based on knowledge and understanding.* - Philippians 1:9