



NG Study Guide: Philippians 1:19-30 “Confidence in Continuing” (1.23.22)

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: The true test of endurance and perseverance comes through adversity over time. As believers, we should be filled with a desire to enter our perfect heavenly home, while also acknowledging the work that God is calling us to during our time on this earth. When we face difficult circumstances, whether external or internal, it can be easy to allow our desire to be with Christ in heaven to block our view of how God would use us on earth. Today we will discover the joy in confidently continuing to live for Christ.

1. Continue to Magnify Christ [19-21]

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

[a] Paul’s Assurance of Deliverance [19]

Paul acknowledges his present circumstances and believes he will be delivered. He connects this assurance to both the prayers of the Philippians and the power of the Spirit. As Christians, we have a unique connection to God’s Spirit, finding the beautiful space between God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Paul asserts that he found comfort in the knowledge that God’s people were praying and that, as a result, God’s Spirit was moving.

[b] Paul’s Assurance of Being Used by God [20a]

Paul’s present situation seems far from glorious, honoring, or inspiring. To anyone opposed to Paul or the work he was doing, it certainly seems like he should feel ashamed. But this is the conclusion of viewing his situation from a worldly perspective. God, being omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent doesn’t view our situations the same as we do. Paul trusted that the Lord was working in ways that he didn’t immediately see or understand but believed that He would use this situation to glorify His name and bless His people. Even when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, we don’t need to feel ashamed, because we know God is working all things together for good.

[c] Paul’s Determination to Magnify Christ

In knowing that God was going to deliver him and use this season of difficulty for His glory, Paul is determined to continue on in faith and magnifying Christ. The idea of “magnify” in the Greek is “to make or declare great”. When we think of “magnifying”, perhaps we think of a magnifying glass or our phone

camera's magnification. In these cases a small object is made to look larger. However, perhaps it's better to think of magnifying God in relation to the work of a telescope. In this instance, you're taking a large object that may be difficult to see and making it more visible. You're not changing the object in any way, only making it easier to see. Similarly, when we magnify Christ, we are declaring His greatness so that others might more easily see Him: His goodness, His grace, His love, etc. We don't make Him great or need to try to present Him in a way we think is more palatable or acceptable to culture. We want to show others exactly who He is. However, our declaration of God's greatness isn't simply in word, but also in action. We magnify the Lord when we gather as the people of God to sing His praises and study His word. However, we have the opportunity to magnify God to our neighbors where we live, work, study, play, and worship through our everyday life. The way we live, speak, think, and ultimately love like Jesus declares the nature of God to others. As we live like Jesus, we magnify Jesus so that others can see Him more clearly.

2. Continue to Serve Others [22-26]

²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

[a] Paul's Competing Desires [22-23]

As we read these two verses, it feels like Paul has taken a major shift in tone. He seemed very positive that he would be delivered and truly believed that God would use his situation in such a way that he didn't need to feel ashamed of his bondage. If you were to imagine Paul being delivered from prison, it's not unlikely to think of him being released from his chains as a free man. Yet, immediately following this assurance of his deliverance, Paul recognizes that Christ would be magnified in him whether it was by life or by death. Paul knew that some way or another, Christ would deliver him, but he left the means of this deliverance up to God. If the Lord saw fit to deliver him in life to continue on earth, praise God. But if He saw fit to deliver Paul from his chains through death, praise God. In light of this, Paul acknowledges this tension between his desire to be with Christ in death while feeling the conviction of continuing in his life on earth. He sees the fruit that is being produced in his life and in the lives of those around him. However, he knows that it would be better for him personally to depart and be with Christ.

[b] Paul's Determination to Serve the Philippians [24-26]

He ultimately finds confidence in continuing as he remembers the value of serving others, the benefits they will experience, and the progress and joy they will experience in the faith as he serves them with all love. When we choose to continue to magnify Christ, specifically through demonstrating a Christ-like love, we can have confidence in the fruit of serving others and should be encouraged to continue for the sake of God's people rejoicing in the work happening in the community of faith. In wrestling with his conflicted desire, we can assume that Paul is mindful of the fact that *he would one day depart this earth and enter into heaven*. Because of this comfort, Paul was able to lay aside his immediate desires for the sake of the long-term benefit of the people at Philippi. To serve others like Christ served, it requires us to consider others before ourselves.

Despite his desire to be with Christ, Paul is determined to be with Philippians for their sake, so that they may rejoice in the work of God in his deliverance from his chains. Likewise, we should be determined to continue to serve those around us with the hopes that the work God is doing in us and through us is to the rejoicing of God's people.

3. Continue to Strive and Suffer for Christ [27-30]

27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. 29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

[a] Paul's Exhortation to Strive for Christ

Be mindful of your conduct

The Greek word "conduct" literally means "to live as a citizen". The idea Paul was expressing was to remember that they were not citizens of earth, but of heaven. Through faith, God had assured them of their place in His kingdom, and as such, they should live as kingdom citizens.

If you spent enough time in a different country, state, or even city, you would notice differences in the ways they lived, talked, and interacted with one another. As we strive for Christ and seek to grow as citizens of the kingdom of God, the way we live, talk, and interact with others should be noticeably different than non-believers as a testimony of our citizenship.

Stand fast in one spirit

Striving for Christ isn't something we should do alone. God has given us a community in which we are to grow, unified by the Spirit, and striving together with one mind set on Christ.

Be unified in faith

While we can be a part of many different communities, only the Church offers a community that is unified in their shared faith in Christ and His gospel.

[b] Paul's Exhortation to Suffer for Christ

Don't fear opposition

Living differently than this world will inevitably lead to conflict and opposition. In John 16:33, Jesus promises that we will face trial and tribulation. Jesus lived the perfect life and still encountered many who opposed Him and sought to stop Him in His pursuit of continuing. As we stand strong against opposition without fear, it is evidence of their ultimate perdition (destruction). The believer can have assurance that God will ultimately bring an end to all that opposes Him and His kingdom.

Remember Christ's suffering and your salvation

Similarly, as we suffer for Christ without fear, it should also remind us of our salvation. As we endure and persevere for the glory of God, it is only because Christ first suffered for us on the cross to earn our salvation and has given us His Spirit that offers strength and boldness to continue on.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How might believers magnify Christ in everyday life?

Q2. What practical steps can believers take to serve one another?

Q3. What fruit have you noticed from serving others in the past year?

Q4. What advice would you give another believer to continue to strive and suffer for Christ?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. This article helps understand biblical suffering better: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-suffering.html>.

2. Read through and be encouraged by praises in Scripture that magnify the Lord. Some good places to start: Psalm 34, Psalm 40, and Luke 1:46-55.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**
- 2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?**

Disciples who make disciples:

- 1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?**
- 2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:**
As we continue to navigate this season of COVID and variants, take time to check in on those in your community that you haven't seen in a while and see how you might be able to serve them.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.