



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Pray Paul's Partnership Prayer



October 3rd-5th, 2020

Philippians 1:3-11

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.

1. Discussion starter: Come up with the best way to explain teamwork to a 5-year-old child.

Answers will vary. If people are stuck encourage them to think of an example, like sports, or a musical group.

Here's one possible answer: Teamwork is when you can do more together than one person could do alone. For example: two people can play catch, but one person cannot. It takes teamwork.

2. Read Acts 16. When Paul remembered their “partnership in the gospel” what might he have thought of?

The People's Bible commentary page has a good summary of this. You can categorize Paul's memories by persons. What would he remember about Lydia? What about the demon possessed girl? The jailer? What about after he left their city? Philippians 4:15 says *Moreover,, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.*” It seems that their support was both friendly and financial.

3. List things you would not do alone but we are doing as partners in ministry at Mount Olive?

Answers will vary. Here's a brief menu of options:

- Public worship
- Bible study
- A large Christian school
- Fellowship with others
- Call trained pastoral leaders
- Building projects
- Ask for prayers
- Worship livestream

What else?

4. Agree or Disagree. Because of Philippians 1:6, we can be confident that our Forward in Faith campaign will be successful.

Agree: God has promised that his church will never be overcome, so our confidence is in God's unfailing promise.

Historically we can also observe that God blesses faithful efforts from his followers. We can be confident that he will also bless our efforts in this campaign.

Disagree: We cannot hold God to promises that he never made.

God never promised that Mount Olive- Appleton will have a fancy Bible study room, growing school, or be debt free by 2023. We can set goals, but God will bless our faithful efforts however **HE** wishes, not however **WE** wish. That's why we pray, “*Thy will be done.*”

Resolution: It depends on how you define the word “success.” If success means we accomplish the goals we set, we cannot be sure of that. We may accomplish all the things laid out in our plan. We may not. If success means that our church will be blessed through this effort, then we can be sure we will succeed. We must

acknowledge that God's blessing may look different from what we had in mind, but it is no less a blessing. For instance, what if we don't achieve our goal, but we do grow closer as a congregation? That is success! God only knows how to give good gifts to his people—even if those gifts are different from what's on our wish-list. (*Matthew 7:9-11* ⁹ "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!")

5. Go through verses 7 and 8, dividing them into chunks wherever a comma or period appears. What does each phrase tell you about Paul's relationship with the Philippian church?

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, - Paul has a good reason to be joyful about what is going on in Philippi.

since I have you in my heart – Paul considers the Philippians dear friends.

whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel – Paul's feeling toward the Philippians endures no matter what his circumstances are.

all of you share in God's grace with me. – Paul's relationship with the Philippians is based on what God has done for them both in Jesus.

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. – Paul genuinely misses seeing his friends from Philippi.

6. Choose one of your answers from question 5 and translate it into a practical goal for your relationships to Mount Olive.

Answers will vary. Try starting each goal with the words "I will" Here are some ideas:

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, - I will find one legitimate reasons to be joyful about my church each week.

since I have you in my heart – I will think about and pray about my friends from Mount Olive daily.

whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel – The next time something bad happens to me, I will look to my

church for encouragement.

all of you share in God's grace with me. – I will establish a connection with someone who is different from me by talking about what God has done for both of us.

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. – I will call someone from church to tell them I enjoy talking to them, and I look forward to seeing them again.

7. If a friend asked you why you pray for your church, how would you explain?

- We are connected to one another because one Jesus came for all of us. That connection makes us want to look out for each other, including prayer for one another. (*v. 8 all of you share in God's grace with me*)
- We are partners in ministry. Just like partners in a project do what they can to help one another, we do what we can to help and one of the biggest helps is praying for one another. (*v. 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*)
- We want our church to be filled with love and wisdom and righteousness so we pray for God to give us those things. (*v. 9 that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight*)
- Ultimately, Jesus commands us to pray. Although that is not in this Bible passage. (*Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*)

8. In your own words, what does Paul ask God to give the Philippians in verse 9-11?

In Paul's words:

LOVE

KNOWLEDGE

INSIGHT

DISCERNMENT

PURE

BLAMELESS

In other words:

- They seek the good of others.

- They know the facts of their situation.

- They apply God's Word to their situation.

- They make good decisions about ministry.

- They are innocent of any crimes.

- Nothing bad can be said about them.

FRUIT - Their faith naturally produces good works.
RIGHTEOUSNESS- They do what's right in God's eyes.

9. How might Praying Paul's Partnership Prayer influence God?
How might it influence the people of our church?

We should note that prayer does influence God.

The Psalms teach us: *"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry."* (Psalm 34:15)
God responded to the prayers of Abraham (*Genesis 18*) and Moses (*Exodus 32*).

Jesus taught, *"Ask and it will be give to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."* (Matthew 7:7-8)

The Apostle James used this example: *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."*

Lack of prayer can have the opposite effect. James says, *"You do not have because you do not ask God."* (James 4:2)

God may be influenced to give us exactly what we ask for. God may give us something other than what we asked for, but it will always be good.

Prayer will also influence our church.

Prayers of thanksgiving may focus our minds on our blessings.

Prayers for the future may align the wills of congregation members

Prayer can keep us thinking about our ministry and how we can discern what's best moving forward.

Finally God's answer to our prayers will have a huge influence on us, as he chooses to bless our work.

10. Work together to write a prayer you might use for Mount Olive. Try to catch the attitude, purpose and request of Philippians 1:3-11.



Prayers will vary. These pictures may guide the thoughts:



- We pray with JOY and CONFIDENCE about what God has done among us.



- We pray because we are connected to our church through what God has done for us in JESUS



- We pray for LOVE and INSIGHT so we can do something awesome in the future.

Here's the sample prayer Pastor used to close the sermon:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for the people at Mount Olive. As different as we are, all sinners, you have connected us all because you sent Jesus for all of us. Fill us with love and wisdom, so we can do something amazing for you.

Amen.