



# A People Who Recognise What is God's Best

(Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11)

“Few of Paul’s prayers have greater potential to help us surmount the hurdles of spiritual dryness and lack of faith than the one in Philippians 1:9-11. It can help us to overcome our excuses for prayerlessness.”

- D.A. Carson

At first glance, this prayer might appear quite like the previous one we dug into in 1 Thessalonians. Certainly, Paul is praying that the church in Philippi’s love would increase. Yet, in this instance, love is not the end goal but a means to another end.

The church in Philippi, the first in Europe, has some stories we might already know: Paul’s night-time vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come to them; Lydia’s conversion and her subsequent water baptism along with her household; the beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas, a midnight prayer and praise service, a significant shake up, and another baptism of an entire household! (See Acts 16.) That’s quite a church launch!

## Read Together

### **Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11 (NIV)**

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may 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. What an example! Paul has a deep love for this church and he is exuberant, even “over the moon”, because of their steadfast faith.

## Explore Together

**1. A Joyful Confidence (1:4-6)** As is typical, Paul begins this prayer with thanksgiving. Paul often reminded his audience that the work which they saw before them was powered by God, Himself.

**Discuss:** What are the reasons Paul’s joy was rooted in the good work that God had begun in the Philippians? In what ways would Paul’s affirmation of God’s continuing empowerment have served as massive encouragement to the church in Philippi? How could it do the same for us?



# A People Who Recognise What is God's Best

(Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11)

**2. A Broad Insight (1:9)** It is probably not typical to think of love as something that overflows in knowledge and deep insight. N.T. Wright explains, "This kind of knowledge is a deep insight into the way God's world truly is, a knowledge open to everyone who is prepared to give themselves whole heartedly in love to God through King Jesus." And D.A. Carson suggests that this love grows in "breadth of insight that is, moral perception across the entire gamut of life's experiences."

**Discuss:** How could our love grow into deep and wide discernment and wisdom If we can't force our love to grow by direct effort (which we can't!). What are we able to do to create an environment where that kind of love will grow? How can we have a community where love is shaped by God given knowledge and insight?

**3. A Kingdom Perspective (1:10-11)** These verses in this passage might seem out of reach. Read where Paul expresses how fervently he wants to know Christ in Philippians 3: 10-11. A Kingdom perspective includes both increasing experiences of the power of our resurrected Lord and increasing participation in His sufferings. Often we may not understand why certain things happen to us or to our loved ones. The young church in Philippi may not have been able to understand why they were experiencing oppositions and some form of persecution. But God had a plan. Paul in the letter to the Romans said "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28.

Just a couple verses further in Philippians Paul describes how he may be in chains but the Gospel is still being spread, and being heard throughout the palace and other sisters and brothers in Christ have become confident in the Lord v12-14. Often our view on things, or our perspective is different to God's view, and God's best for us and beyond. God has always a plan working for us and through us.

How can we gain a Kingdom perspective and be filled with the fruit of righteousness? It is all through Jesus Christ not by our own efforts but by the grace and power of God.

**Discuss:** What phrase in this prayer is tugging at your heart and mind most strongly - is it "discern what is best" or "pure and blameless" or "filled with the fruit of righteousness" or... How do you need to respond? In what tangible ways can we commit to pursuing and recognising God's purpose and God's ways in our every day?



# A People Who Recognise What is God's Best

(Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11)

## Pray Together

Oh, Lord God! Thank You for Your grace and unfailing mercy. Once again, we surrender. We acknowledge that our deepest desires for holiness and a life that bears fruit of righteousness cannot be reached without You. We desperately need You.

Collectively, we say, "HELP!"

Thank You for the good work that YOU have begun. Thank You for carrying it to completion.

Amen.

## Digging Deeper

An excerpt from D.A. Carson's book that is referenced in Resources

"It does not take much reading in the history of revivals to discover that when true revival dawns, resentments are dissolved. When revival comes, self promotion is seen to be ugly and withers away. When revival comes, men and women are concerned to be holy, they are serious about integrity, they embrace genuine self denial and learn to love. When revival comes, worship is no longer an exercise but one of the chief characteristics of our lives."

## Suggested Resources

- **Book: Tom Wright** - Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians
- **Book: D.A. Carson** - Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation
- **Book: Tyler Staton** - Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools