



## LC STUDY GUIDE

### Done in Sync with the Come Together Sermon Series

The Passage: Philippians 4:1-9

For Life Community usage the week of 10/19/14

**Intro:** We all know that community can be messy. It's often extremely discouraging to have conflict with someone in your own church, especially someone you have served alongside. How do we as followers of Jesus model reconciliation, pursue unity together, and allow our "gentleness to be evident to all"? Tonight, we'll unpack some of this as Paul starts to bring Philippians to a close.

### **Today's Big Idea: Paul calls for unity, reconciliation, gentleness, and joy in all situations as the marks of Christian community.**

Philippians 4:1-9 (NIV)

**1** Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

**2** I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

**4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

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**O** – Transitioning to this section of his letter, Paul moves from the vision-casting of believers' "citizenship of heaven" to a very specific situation with a strong pastoral tone. What do you notice about Paul's approach?

*(He seems very intent on not taking a side but instead, praising both Euodia and Syntyche as strong contributors. He is trying to broker a long-distance process of reconciliation that can only be conducted by those closest, in proximity, relationship, and creedal confession.)*

**I** – It could feel odd that a couple-thousand-year-old dispute has been canonized. (Imagine the countless conversations in heaven, “Oh you’re Euodia/Syntyche! Did you ever get that worked out? Is it ok that I asked?”). Of course, Paul could not forecast how widely distributed these letters would be over the ages but even to him, writing this here was precious parchment real-estate. So what are some of the reasons Paul dedicates these lines in his precious correspondence?

*(Among the major themes of the letter to the Philippians is the unity found in Christ. This is a situation that is not only repeated in this community and many others, but it’s also a feud happening between two strong kingdom-builders.)*

**A** – Everyone has had the experience of being caught in the middle between two feuding family members/friends. What have you learned about balancing "staying out of it" and playing a mediating role?

**O** – In verses 4-7, Paul sounds like an eternal optimist, “Be happy always!” How do we find the balance between feeling our stress and pain, not being controlled by it, and finding freedom from it?

*(Vs. 5-7 can help us see how Paul processed the stress and pain brought from his persecution and current imprisonment.)*

**I** – What do you find helpful or striking about how Paul instructs his readers to handle their stress and anxiety?

**A** – Looking back, is there a situation you can share where you found yourself surprisingly at peace and a recipient of God-sent joy in the midst of a “storm of life”?

**O** – What do you find most encouraging and inspiring in verses 8-9?

**I** – The beauty in the term “gentleness” (*epieikes*) is often lost in the translation from Greek to English as we do not have a word that really describes it. Paul is referring to the idea where the believer yields his/her rights in order to show love, kindness, and understanding to another. This, of course, is very Jesus-like. How does this reframe our understanding in “our gentleness being evident to all”?

**A** – What challenges prevent us from applying these practices (from vs. 8-9) and what can we do to apply them to our lives?

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- c. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- d. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- e. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- f. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- g. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.