

For the first few months of 2020, we are working on a new format for Life Group discussion guides. These new guides will still use the Bible passages and topics from the weekend message, but they will also be designed to help your Life Group members learn how to study the Bible on their own. We will be using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible and to organize these discussion guides. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the new format, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to me at

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In the months of January and February, we will be looking at making first and next steps towards true change in the areas of purpose, mental health, finances, and relationships.

### *How to Use This Discussion Guide*

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

**Date of Sermon:** February 1-2, 2020

**Topic of Sermon:** Moving from debt to freedom

**Main Passage:** Philippians 4:13-19

**BEFORE your group meeting:**

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

**Topic of Life Group Meeting:** A follower of Jesus is moved to support the mission of Jesus in the world.

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**Icebreakers (optional)**

- If you unexpectedly received \$10,000 tax-free tomorrow, what would you do with it?
- Did your thoughts go first to yourself or to others?

**Leader’s Note:** Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

*“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time today on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. I’m going to give us about 5 minutes to do this. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”*

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

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**HIGHLIGHT the Passage**

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

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**EXPLAIN the Passage**

- What are some things this passage revealed about people?
- If Paul had learned to get along without, why do you think he commended the church in Philippi for sending a gift?
- What are some of the things (needs, wants, attitudes) that most often keep Christians from sacrificial giving? Which one of these resonates most with you personally?
- What are some things this passage revealed about God? His nature, His work, or His character?
- Why do you think God values our sacrifices?
- Why is it important for us to know and believe that our sovereign God provides for us?

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**APPLY the Passage**

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- By God’s power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?
- If you imagine your budget right now, where are some areas you could cut back to make room for more giving to the mission of Jesus?
- In what ways does giving to support the work of missions stretch and deepen faith?
- Who in your sphere of influence (neighbors, coworkers, friends, family) could you help this week? How?

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**RESPOND to the Passage**

- Thank Jesus for the way He has blessed you and ask Him to show you ways you can give generously to the work of missions through giving in the church.

## COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

**4:14.** Sometimes the Lord works through His redeemed people to meet human needs. Contentment did not do away with troubled circumstances. Paul knew operating from a Roman jail cell, chained to a Roman soldier, was not operating from a position of power. He was in trouble. The present Epaphroditus brought from Philippi helped. Paul wanted the Philippians to know this and to know how commendable he considered their loving action to be.

**4:15.** The Philippians' gift was not unexpected. They had treated Paul this way before in the early days of his ministry in Europe (see Acts 16:12-40). Paul described their relationship with him at that time in technical accounting terms. No other church entered into a financial partnership with him. In a sense, the Philippian letter is Paul's official receipt, acknowledging and giving credit for the church's gift to him. Paul went directly from Philippi to Thessalonica (Acts 16:12-17:1). Though we have no record of them, there the Philippians began sending him gifts (2 Corinthians 8:1-9). Thus Paul acknowledged the depth and length of his relationship with the Philippian church. He also acknowledged that he had a need, even when he learned to be content.

**4:17.** Again the apostle revealed that the motive for his thankfulness of their partnership in his ministry was not to secure another gift. His letter was not a fund-raising attempt. He wanted them to realize that their deeds would not go unnoticed. They have a deposit in heaven that will yield rich dividends. (See Matthew 6:19-21.)

**4:18.** Paul finds another way to show he is not writing to ask for another gift. He retained his accounting vocabulary. The letter he sent with Epaphroditus was his receipt marked "paid in full" and more. His needs were met through the Philippians' gifts. These good deeds not only satisfied Paul but were a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God (see Leviticus 7:12-15 for more on thanksgiving offerings). Giving to God's servant for God's work is a gift to God, a first-class offering (compare to Rom. 12:1 and Hebrews 13:16).

**4:19.** Their obedience and generosity would bring God's reward, giving encouragement and expectation to the readers. As they met all of Paul's needs (v. 16), so God would meet all their needs. God does this out of the abundance of His treasury, a glorious resource without limits. How does one draw from these unlimited resources? Through Christ Jesus. Only those in Him have access to God's account and can ask Him to meet their needs. This account was not just referring to monetary needs, but also spiritual ones (see Ephesians 1:3-4).

Paul concluded the body of the letter with a doxology praising God (v. 20). The thought of God's providing our needs in Christ naturally led to praise and thanksgiving. The God of glory and honor is not far removed from us, however. He remains our Father ready to bring love and resources to meet our needs. Thus, glory belongs to Him forever—into the unseen ages.

Life Group Member Guide

**Focal Passage:** Philippians 4:13-19 (ESV)

**Passage in Context:** Philippians 4:10-23 (ESV)



**Bible-Reading Tip:** Use a good study Bible. The ESV Study Bible and CSB Study Bible are great ones with lots of notes. A good study Bible will help you know what was going on when a particular passage was written and will help you define terms that may be foreign to you or our world today. In this passage, Paul was writing from prison. The Philippian church had sent Epaphroditus with a monetary gift to support Paul and his work of spreading the gospel in Rome.

<sup>10</sup> I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. <sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> **I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**

<sup>14</sup> **Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble.** <sup>15</sup> **And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.** <sup>16</sup> **Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.** <sup>17</sup> **Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.** <sup>18</sup> **I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.** <sup>19</sup> **And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.** <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>21</sup> Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. <sup>22</sup> All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

**HEAR Bible Reading Method**

**HIGHLIGHT the passage**

- Underline any repeated words or key ideas you see.
- Note any questions you have about what you read.
- In 2-3 sentences, summarize what was said or what happened.

**EXPLAIN the passage**

- What was revealed about God? His character, desires, and/or actions?
- What was revealed about people? What we are/do or what we should be/do?

**APPLY the passage**

- From this reading, what truth do you need to embrace?
- By God's power, how will you THINK, SPEAK, or ACT differently based on what you read?

**RESPOND to the passage**

- Talk to God about what you've seen and learned in this passage.
- Ask Him to help you apply the truth to your life.