

Aim of lesson

To show Paul's love and concern for the young churches he left behind, and their care for him, and to look at some of the teaching he gives them and us.

Bible background

Philippians – especially 1:1-20; 2:1-5, 12-30; 4:4-23.

Outline of lesson

Ask the class about last week's lesson. Tell them that today you are going to have another look at a letter that Paul later wrote to the church he established at Philippi.

From Philippi to Rome

Have the class fill in the adventure game/quiz at the top of the worksheet. Without help from you, they should be able to discover who they are, and what they are doing in the game. The game should form an introduction to the letter to the Philippians, since that is what Epaphroditus took back from Paul to Philippi at the end. All the questions can be answered from the references given, except the length of the journey which will have to be estimated from the map at the beginning of the worksheets. The shortest distance would be approximately 700 miles, but his route was probably a lot more.

Prison in Rome

Help the class to think about Paul in prison in Rome. It is likely that the letter was written during the time described at the end of Acts 28; he was guarded by a soldier (v16), in chains (v20), but he had freedom to meet people who visited him (v30). How he would have appreciated the help the Philippians sent, as well as the knowledge that they were thinking of him! Get them to look up and write in their own words Paul's prayer for the Philippians.

As lights in the world

The rest of the worksheet develops two points of teaching that Paul gave to the Philippians. The first, to be noted in the star, is the teaching contained in Philippians 2:14-16 that we should not complain or argue, but we should hold out to others the word of life.

This can be contrasted with the popular idea of being a 'star'. Being a star in God's sight is of real value.

The peace of God

The second point of teaching develops Paul's words about the peace of God. The circles should have the words 'Rejoice in the Lord', 'Be gentle to all' and 'Do not be anxious – pray'. The references allow the class to see what Paul in his situation found to rejoice about:

- that Christ was being preached (Philippians 1:18);
- that the church was united in love (2:2);
- even that he might have to die for Christ (2:17);
- that the Philippians had shown their love by sending a gift (4:10).

Digging deeper

What is Greek?

This section looks at what 'Greek' means – the language, the people, the empire, and the culture. It would be useful to have a map of the Greek empire.

Relevance to our lives

The class could discuss things that people worry about. Be ready to contribute something you are or have been anxious about. Help the class to learn the lesson of praying, and of being thankful. It is easy for us to forget to be thankful when we have a problem.

Prayer

The class could divide into three groups to write a prayer each taking ideas from (1) the prayer of Paul, (2) the recipe for the peace of God and (3) the way to be a star.

Other suggestions for activities

- You could bring enough postcards to class for each member to write to an ecclesia somewhere else in the world sending greetings.
- An older class may like to read Philippians 3 looking for evidence of the same problem that was discussed at Jerusalem cropping up again.