

Week 1 Philippians 1.1-11

Paul's Reason for Thanks

- I. Prayer
- II. Opening Question
 - a. What are some examples you've seen that bear out this principle that there is more glory in finishing than beginning?
- III. Read N.T. Wright Commentary p.83-87
- IV. Scan Aesthetic Commentary p.3-35
- V. Discussion Questions
 - a. How would you have defined "grace" and "peace" before beginning this book?
 - b. Where/how do you hear the words "grace" and "peace" in contemporary usage? What attributes does our culture honor as "gracious" or "peaceful?"
 - c. Have you experienced God's grace in your life? How?
 - d. In what ways might your understanding and personal experience of God's grace impact your relationship with other people in the Church/in the world?
Consider the Christian community you are a part of. Would you say that you are in partnership for the gospel, or is your fellowship more social? Why do you answer as you do?
 - e. Why did the Philippians bring Paul joy?
 - f. As Sir Francis Drake reminded us in his prayer, the glory is not in beginning a task but in finishing it. The confidence Paul had throughout this letter is that God himself is a *finisher* as well as a *beginner* (v. 6). The particular work which God has begun, and will finish, is the work of grace, through the gospel, in the hearts and lives of the Philippian Christians.
How is it easy or hard for you to trust God to complete the work he's started in you or in others? And Why?
 - g. Who is someone of whom you can say "I thank my God every time I think of you" (vs. 3) and why?
 - h. Paul prays that the Philippians' love will overflow in knowledge and wisdom (vs. 9). How does this idea contrast with more popular ideas of love?
 - i. Paul also prays that this wise love will result in moral discernment (v. 10). Why is moral discernment a necessary component of Christian love?
 - j. Have you ever had the experience of someone praying specifically for you? How did that make you feel?
 - k. Read Romans 8:34. Notice that Christ's intercession (prayer) for his people is ongoing. Is the reality of Christ continuously praying for you part of your conscious experience of life?
 - l. When you pray, what percentage of your prayer is focused on talking to God, and what percentage is focused on listening for God and discerning God's will?
 - m. Can you think of a specific example in your life when God's will proved to be best for you despite the circumstances of the moment?