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about the author

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how to use this study

Each lesson in this *The Cornerstone of Our Faith* study has four major parts.

Every lesson begins with an introductory section called **The Foundation**. In this section, the author will give background material to help prepare your mind and heart for God’s Word.

The second part of each lesson is called **The Cornerstone**. This section is always the heart of every lesson. The Bible is explored in detail to help us understand the text. Those who are accustomed to hearing African-American preaching can hear this section “preach.” God’s Word is powerfully presented so that all can understand.

The next section of each study is critical for the Word to fulfill its intended purpose. It is called **The Inscription**. Just as people take note of inscriptions on cornerstones or monuments, each lesson is written so as to drive home a point worth remembering and a principle worth following. It offers the encouragement to change attitudes or behaviors to align better with God’s Word. To *know* the Bible is one thing; to *do* it is another.

Every lesson ends with a series of thought-provoking **Discussion Questions** that help you explore God’s Word on a personal and a congregational level. These questions provide opportunities for group discussion and participation. Teachers can tell by the responses whether their students have really come to grips with the lesson.
In his 1962 commentary on Paul’s letter to the Philippians, William Hendrickson introduces the book as a search for true happiness. It seems to be a quest that is common for all of mankind.

He outlines Paul’s letter as: (1) the secret of happiness; (2) the man who learned the secret; and (3) Christ who taught him the secret. In this study, Paul shares what he has both learned and experienced—true contentment, peace, and happiness. All are found through our faithful relationship with Jesus Christ.
lesson 1

The Kind of Leaders God Wants

*Philippians 1:1*

Someone has well said, “Good leaders never set themselves above their followers—except in carrying out responsibilities.” The world does not need more leaders; the world and the church need more godly and effective leaders today.

In one verse, Philippians 1:1, the apostle Paul provided a significant leadership quality that is often overlooked. He wrote, “Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons” (NASB).

During his second missionary journey, Paul and his ministerial companions answered the “Macedonian call” and traveled to Philippi (Acts 16:9, 10). There, Paul and Silas met, taught, and baptized Lydia and her family into Christ (Acts 16:14, 15). After exorcising a “spirit of divination” from a slave-girl, Paul and Silas suffered a merciless beating and an unjust imprisonment, but God empowered them to touch and transform the Philippian jailer and his family into Christians (Acts 16:25-34).

When Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians around 62 A.D., he was in prison in Rome (Philippians 1:13, 14; 4:22). The Philippian Christians faced two main problems. First, op-
ponents (Philippians 1:28) and dogs (Philippians 3:2) attacked them from without. Second, discord among women threatened the church’s unity from within (Philippians 4:2).

The second issue—division—most disturbed Paul; therefore, he stressed that humility, selflessness, and sacrifice are the antidotes to division. Jesus is the perfect example of humility (Philippians 2:5-11). Timothy is a good model of selflessness (Philippians 2:19-24). Epaphroditus is a good noteworthy example of sacrificial love (Philippians 2:25-30). Paul then urged believers at Philippi to look first to Jesus’ perfect example and to reflect second on the good work of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Indeed, Philippians 1:1 is pivotal to understanding the rest of the epistle. Paul refers to Timothy and himself as “bond-servants” (NASB) or “servants” of Jesus Christ (NIV). The Greek word for “bond-servant” or “servant” is *doulos*, which meant one who as “totally in bondage to the claims of his master. He had no rights and no freedoms” (Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 4). Paul used the same word—*doulos*—in Philippians 2:7. Paul wanted the Philippian Christians to understand that he and Timothy were not all-stars or superstars in the church; instead, they were devoted servants and subordinates whom Jesus owned “lock, stock, and barrel.” Paul’s message was, “That is the way the saints in must view themselves—as slaves under the Lord’s complete control.”

True servants of Jesus Christ do not complain or murmur (Philippians 2:14). Authentic servants of the Lord do not parade lofty titles to draw attention to themselves. Jesus told His followers: “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and your are all brothers. And do not call
anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Genuine servants do not elevate themselves by seeking seats of honor and power at banquets. “But when you are invited,” Jesus again advised His disciples, “take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:10, 11).

Instead of flaunting titles, slaves of Jesus Christ wear a towel because they are committed to doing dirty and menial tasks by serving others (John 13:4-17). Real servants understand that the path to greatness is not by being served, but by serving others (Mark 10:43-45).

Bible commentator Alec Motyer has observed that there are three kinds of leaders. First, the strong, natural leader “chooses the easy path of being out front, taking it for granted that all will follow.” Second, the low-profile leader “‘plays it cool’, submerges his own identity and takes the risk that the tail will soon wag the dog.” Third, companionate leadership—“the saints with the overseers and deacons”—realizes that “leader and led share the same Christian experience: both are sinners saved by the same precious blood, always and without distinction wholly dependent on the same patient mercy of God” (Motyer, The Message of Philippians, 40).

Church leaders should never view themselves as merely over or above God’s people, but with them. Scripture clearly attests that we are “workers together with God” (1 Corinthians
3:9) and “working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Just as God works alongside of church leaders, preachers and elders should work hand in hand with church members.

What kind of leader does God want? Not the Lone Ranger leader, who thinks he can do it all alone (like Moses in Exodus 18:13-26). Not the money-driven leader, who seeks money and material goods more than ministry to God’s people (like Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:15-27 and Judas in John 12:4-6). Not the materialistic leader, who will abandon God’s people for worldly gain and pleasure (like Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10; see also John 10:12, 13). Not the domineering or dictatorial leader, who actually thinks he is “the head” of the church (like Diotrephes in 3 John 9, 10). God wants leaders like Jesus, who humbly obeyed His Father’s will and who came “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Questions for Discussion
1. When did Paul and his ministerial companions establish the Philippian congregation?
2. When Paul wrote the epistle to the Philippians, what two problems faced the Christians there?
3. What was a *doulos*?
4. How do you feel about being a *doulos* (slave) to Jesus? (See Romans 6:16-18.)
5. What is a strong natural leader?
6. What is a low-profile leader?
7. Give an example from the Bible of a domineering or a dictatorial leader.
8. Give an example from the Bible of a Lone Ranger leader.
9. Give an example from the Bible of a worldly or materialistic leader.
10. What makes Jesus the perfect example of leadership?