

LIFELINES

Six Words of Rescue for Those
Who Are Struggling

WEEKLY STUDY



WEEK THREE

The LIFELINES series is based on the beautiful and challenging letter to the Philippians. Each week we will be offered a “lifeline” that God intends to lift us up by. This week we focused on Paul’s teaching about grumbling and complaining within the community of believers. It’s something we all struggle with on one level or another. Conversations that are centered on negativity can leave us feeling empty and like we are in a deep dark pit. God is offering us a lifeline to pull us out of these pits and to help us avoid them in the future. God’s lifeline to us is God’s desire to shine through us to bring love and hope to a dark world. If you are studying with your Providence Small Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture. Follow the daily prayer prompt and then prayer this prayer together:

God, You know our hearts and you know our weakness. When we are in a season of stress, we can fall into traps that keep our focus on ourselves instead of you. Forgive us God. We reach for the lifelines you offer to us to be lifted up to a beautiful life in Christ. We reach for Jesus. Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: PHILIPPIANS 1.27

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

- Paul is setting a high bar to measure ourselves by. Actually, Jesus set the bar and Paul is pointing it out in love. His motivation was not to shame the Philippian church, but to ask them to hold on for the sake of unity. What does Paul’s encouragement mean to you? Are there certain events or seasons that fall out of the “whatever happens” category? What current events might cause you to ask Paul, “Does ‘whatever happens’ even include _____?”
- *Pray for a resolute heart and determination to stay focused on the gospel of Christ no matter what happens.*

TUESDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ *Who, being in very nature^{a)} God,*

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

- Through a series of “therefores”, Paul connects our conduct with the conduct of Jesus. If the individual followers and the church as a whole are called to a part of the body of Christ, it means having a change of orientation--a change of mindset. What about the mindset of Jesus is most profound to you? What seems to be the most difficult for you to wrap your mind around?
- *Pray for a renewed mind that sees others the way Jesus does.*

WEDNESDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.12-13

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

- Being the good pastor that he is, Paul encourages the church to stay focused whether he is with them or not. His reminder is that they are in process. Our salvation is a gift from God and the work of Christ is done, but the work of the believer goes on. We have to “work out” of our salvation in the way we interact with each other and the world. It’s a constant struggle, and so Paul says to do it with fear and trembling. These words are humbling words that also are connected to our worship. Work out salvation with a constant eye on Christ, because it is God who is at work in you--not you alone. What is the good promise that God is working out through you?
- *Pray for an awareness of the ways God is working in you to fulfill God’s good purpose.*

THURSDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.14a

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing...

- This is only part of the instruction from Paul, but this command is challenging all on its own! Grumbling and complaining is a characteristic of human beings for thousands of years. Our ancient history, recent history, and current behavior reveal that to be true. But Paul is saying it’s possible to live a different way. What would be different about your daily life if there was less grumbling and complaining from yourself and those you do life with?
- *Pray for a constant reminder of this call to live differently.*

FRIDAY: PHILIPPIANS 2.14-15

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.

- Verse 15 starts with a “so that” which frames the previous teaching. If we can live in a way that eliminates grumbling and complaining, we will become “blameless and pure”. Holiness is another word for this. Another way of saying “holy” is “set apart”. Do you want to be a part of the “set apart”? The church (*ecclesia* in Greek) is the “called out” community” To be the church

means to be set apart, to be holy, to be blameless and pure...to do everything without grumbling or arguing. And then we will shine like stars. God created the stars to invoke worship (Psalm 147.4). God created you to shine like the stars. What does this truth tell you about your role in creation and your role in these present times?

- *Pray that you would be an "illuminator in the darkness", that you would shine for God.*

SATURDAY: PSALM 142.1-2

I cry aloud to the LORD;

I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.

²*I pour out before him my complaint;*

before him I tell my trouble.

- Pastor Mark compared the downward spiral of complaining to feeling like we are in a pit. David wrote this Psalm from a cave. It's a prayer really, a prayer stating his complaint before God. Have you ever lifted your complaints to God before expressing them to another person? Do you think that changed the outcome? If so, how?
 - *Pray your complaints to God...and then consider if you they need to go farther.*
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SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

- Have you ever experienced the downward spiral of complaining and negativity? Why do we sometimes get drawn into them? Consider the three steps when facing that spiral. (1. Pray 2. Elevate the conversation 3. Walk away)How might they change your perspective?
- God gives us a lifeline through God's desire to shine through us. How might God shine through you this week?