



GOALS

As students experience Philippians 1, they will. . .

- find out about Paul’s life situation when he wrote Philippians.
- learn how to pray more powerfully for each other.
- have a better understanding of Paul’s direction and encouragement to the Philippians.

MATERIALS: Group

- Colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- Whiteboard and markers
- Table (optional)
- For your opening activity, you will need two large containers (roughly shoebox size) of multiple colors of Legos, two blindfolds, and a timer. You may want to collect the Legos from families or have students bring a few of their own.
- For an optional quick video to understand the game of Minecraft, visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOQ6PfyBagE
- To make it fun, you may want to reward the students who correctly answer the “Bonus” review question (see below) and win the Lego opening activity. If so, you’ll want to pick up an inexpensive gift such as candy or a \$5 gift card from iTunes.

MATERIALS: Each Student

- A Bible
- A pen
- Student pages for Session 2
- Scripture sheets for Philippians 1

SESSION INTRO

Prayer

After your students have gathered, pray for your group in the same way Epaphras prayed for his friends in Colossians 4:12—that they “may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.”

Review

Help your students stay connected to the big themes of this study by asking the following questions:

- Who wrote Philippians? What kind of book is it?
- Who did God use (besides Paul) to start the church in Philippi?
- Bonus Question: What was Lydia’s occupation? (You may want to give a prize to the student who can come up with the answer to this one!)

OPEN: PARTNERSHIPS!

Ask for four volunteers to do an opening activity (or ask for two, and let each pick a partner to ease the awkwardness of being paired with someone) to illustrate the concept of partnership, a key theme in today's chunk of Philippians. Once they are paired, say in your own words:

We are going to build some Lego towers. In front of each team, you see a box of random Legos. Your job is to build a tower of one color (orange or black or whatever you have plenty of in the box.) There is one catch, you have to build the tower blindfolded! There is good news though: Your partner will be able to guide you in picking the right colors. The "seeing" partner won't be able to touch the Legos, but they can give plenty of helpful direction to let you know if you have the right color in your hands. I will give both teams one minute to build their tower as tall as they can. The team with the tallest tower of the same color will be the winner!

Instructions:

1. **If you have a table in your room, position partners across the table from each other. If no table, have them sit on the floor.**
2. **Place a box of Legos in front of each team; you may want to dump the box of Legos onto the table.**
3. **Before putting blindfolds in place, have the teams choose which color of Legos they'd like to use to build their tower.**
4. **Put the blindfolds in place, then mix up the Legos in the pile.**
5. **Set your timer and let the building begin. The "seeing" partner can give verbal instructions but no touching. The remainder of your group can serve as cheerleaders.**
6. **After one minute, give an optional small candy prize to the winning duo.**

After rewarding the team with the tallest Lego tower, ask the following questions of both teams:

What made it possible for you to build the tower?

What did you find frustrating?

What would you have accomplished without a "seeing" partner?

Share in your own words:

This exercise illustrates a key point in the chunk of Philippians we're looking at today: we desperately need each other to effectively live out the gospel.

DIGGING IN

Remind your students that since Philippians is a letter from Paul (with help from Timothy) to Christians in Philippi, studying Philippians is a lot like reading someone else's mail. One of the best ways to understand the letter is to find out as much as possible about both the writer of the letter and the people he wrote it to.

Have your students read Philippians 1:3-6 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, have them circle with a pen the four longest words in the passage. When most have finished, ask them to tell you which words they circled. Write these four words on the board: *remember*, *partnership*, *confident*, *completion*. Take a moment to let students take a stab at what each word means. Steer your discussion toward the definitions below.

- *remember: to think back over something*
- *partnership: teaming up of two or more people for a common goal*
- *confident: being certain or sure of something*
- *completion: to finish a job or task*

Not only are these the biggest words in these four verses, they are also key words that give a clue about the content of this letter.

Ask:

What insight do these words give you into the nature of the book of Philippians?

Possible responses:

The writer and recipients apparently had a deep or familiar relationship.

There is an atmosphere of encouragement to persevere.

Direct your students to look back at verse four and discuss these questions:

Looking at verse four, how does Paul say that he prayed for his friends?

With joy

What does this say about their relationship? Don't forget, Paul was in jail when he was writing this letter!

That he cared deeply for them even though they weren't together. Thinking of them made him happy even while he was in jail.

What do you think Paul meant when he said they had a "partnership" in the gospel?

They were working together to share the gospel message with everyone. They had the same goal.

How could they have a partnership if he was far away from the Philippians?

He wrote them letters to encourage them. He prayed for them. They had a common goal.

Paul said he was "confident" of something. What was it?

That He (God) who began a good work in them would bring it to completion (finish it).

Sometimes we commit to be more like Christ, but we end up failing and feeling miserable. How do you think having strong godly partnerships makes us more successful in following God's plan?

Support and friendship make the journey more fun; accountability is always helpful.

TAKING IT INWARD

If God was doing a "good work" in the Philippian Christians, He is also doing a "good work" in all of us. Ask your students to think about the good work God might be doing in their own lives. Ask in your own words:

God does good work in us by building us up to be more like Him. He adds good, healthy things in our lives to help us grow and become stronger. What good things might God be building in your life? Take a moment to write one on the long side of each "Lego" brick on your student journal page.

Possible responses:

He is speaking to my heart. He wants to help me know Him more. He is teaching me through this Bible study. He has placed people in my life to help me know Him.

Share in your own words:

Sometimes God can begin a good work in us but we can have distractions or conflicts that discourage the good work God is doing in us. We need to let God carry that good work in us all the way to completion!

Ask your students:

Have any of you ever played Minecraft? Someone use just a few words to describe how this game works. (If your students need a quick tutorial, you can visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOQ6PfyBagE or search "Minecraft for Parents" which gives a 5 minute overview.)

Elicit the response that Minecraft is basically digital Legos, played through an app or online. "Steve" is the main character, controlled by the player, who chooses pieces to create buildings along the journey through different "worlds." He is able to uncover treasure and collect helpful tools to benefit his building. But, he also has many conflicts that can deter him from building, such as Creepers, Zombies, Endermen, and other distractions.

As you can imagine, Minecraft discussion could spark tangent conversations. Keep the students on course and guide them to this clear point: The goal of the game is to build buildings despite the many distractions that can thwart the project.

Minecraft Steve only works with your help. You control his actions and moves, giving him direction to build the buildings, helping him select the items and materials he needs. With all the distractions going on, how much would get done without your input?

Zero. Without someone guiding him, Steve is not effective and the project doesn't get done.

Paul was in a partnership with the Philippians. He wanted to encourage them to grow closer to God. Do you have partnerships like this in your life? Who are the partners that help you grow toward God? Write a name on each Minecraft sword on your journal page.

Examples:

Parents. Bible study leaders. Older Christian friends/siblings. Youth leaders.

Now think about your partnerships in another way. Do you have people in your life whom *you* could encourage in their growth with God?

Possible responses:

Friends at school, teammates, younger siblings.

Look back over the “good works” you listed on your journal page under Taking It Inward. What distractions might be keeping these works from being totally completed in you? Write down four “creepers” (distractions) in your life on the Minecraft Creepers you see on your journal page.

Possible responses:

Friends who keep us from church/ministry opportunities, sports, performances and practices that interfere with church or Bible study; video games or other activities that replace my time I could be reading my Bible.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Share in your own words:

Paul was guiding the Philippians and encouraging them through letters and prayers. He was helping them make wise choices and encouraging them to do things that honored God. Their “project” was to share the Good News about Jesus. Being able to spot the “good works” God is trying to do in our lives, and having people to partner with us to get them done is very important! As we close, let’s take some time to look over both our “good works” and our “partners” as well as the distractions that keep us from completion. On the last section of your student journal page, you’ll see a prayer to help focus on one good work, one distraction, and the people God can use to help you with both. Finish with this exercise as a way to thank God for giving us people to help us stay on course!

Ask for volunteers to share a prayer request related to the good works or distractions that might prevent God from completing His work in them. If anyone shares, give them a chance to write on their journal page how they can pray for one another throughout the week. After any sharing has taken place, pray over your students before you leave, asking God to carry His good work out in their lives, giving them the courage to remove the distractions so it can all be done to glorify God.

Before your group disperses, invite them to boil their thoughts down to a single fact about following Christ. Have them write this short statement under the heading “What I Learned about Following Christ” on their journal pages. Point out that there’s not much space so they may want to use the back of their journal pages for their statements.