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Study Guide on Philippians

The purpose of this study guide is, as the title indicates, to guide the study of Paul's letter to the Philippians. The task of a guide is to lead people and point out things that are important or worth remembering. This study guide aims to do that as well. It is therefore not a complete explanation of the letter. In fact, in order to explore the riches of this letter, this study guide contains more questions than explanation. Therefore this study guide works well in combination with books that explain the Letter of Paul to the Philippians.

Why ask so many questions in this study guide? The aim in asking questions is to understand the meaning of a text or a passage. To accomplish this, it is helpful to follow a systematic approach.

There are three kinds of questions. The first ask about the actual wording and sentences. What does the text or passage say? Do we understand all the words? Could you say in in your own words? The sentence structure is also important. How does each sentence flow? What is the connection between the sentences? The next group of questions deals with the meaning of the text. What did Paul want to convey to the readers? What is the meaning of the text? This also requires looking at the immediate context, as well as the larger context, and the purpose of the letter. Asking these questions should help to describe the message of the text or passage in a clear way. The third kind of questions aims to apply what we have learned to our lives. How do we work with this message in our lives? What does the message of the text mean for us?

I have tried to keep these three kinds of questions in mind as I worked on this study guide. I have divided the letter in six sections and each section again in smaller units. At the beginning of each section I have tried to indicate how each section and sub-section fits within the whole letter. This

is followed by questions about the text, and then by questions and pointers for further discussion. It my prayer that this booklet is indeed a good guide and that in discussing these questions the riches of this letter will benefit those who use it.

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Philippians 1:1-11

Philippians 1:1-11 can be divided as follows:

1:1-2 Opening and Greeting

1:3-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer

Opening and Greeting (1:1-2)

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul opens this letter in the way that was customary in his time. He lists the authors, the recipients and then adds a greeting or blessing.

1. Who are (or, is) writing this letter?

2. Who are the addressees? What is meant with the expression “the saints”? Who are “the overseers”?

3. What is the meaning of the opening blessing?

Although Paul uses the customary opening, he highlights the message of this letter in these opening verses. All three parts of the greeting (author, recipients, greeting) are connected to Christ.

4. What is Paul's position before Christ? What does this mean?

5. How does he describe the congregation? What does this mean?

6. How does he connect the greeting to Christ? Or, how do the grace and peace that come from God relate to the work of Jesus Christ?

7. What do these first verses teach us about Christ and about ourselves?

Further discussion

8. These opening verses show that Paul and Timothy work together. In more of his letters Paul mentions others. What does this teach us about the way Paul works with others? How can we apply this?
