

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more..." Philippians 1:9

Introduction

Questions to ask at your table:

- What is something that brought you joy this week?
- Describe a situation from your own life that requires HOPE right now.
- Do you think of yourself as holy? Why/not?
- Are you a fan of group projects? Why/not?

Chapter 1

Seeing the Forrest and the Trees

The reading of Scripture is about transformation – about becoming more and more like Jesus. And so, when we read the scripture, we must not miss the story for the details nor the details for the story. *"When we submit our lives to what we read in Scripture, we find that we are not being led to see God in our stories but our stories in God's. God is the larger context and plot in which our stories find themselves."*ⁱ

And yet, we can not simply read at whim. Again, Peterson notes: *"It is God's word, or so we believe, and we had better get it right. Exegesis is the care we give to getting the words right...the more mature we become in the Christian faith, the more exegetically rigorous we must become."*ⁱⁱ

In other words, we must read and understand the _____
_____ while also having a care for all the _____
_____.

READ Chapter 1

- Describe the theme(s) of chapter one in a few words or sentences.

Read 1:1-2 -

A Little About Paul and Timothy

- Acts 16:1-5 -
- 1 Corinthians 4:14-17 -

QUESTION: Do you consider yourself to be free? If so, how so? If not, why not?

- δοῦλοι - "servants/slaves"
- Romans 6:17-18 -

Paul addresses this letter to "the saints" - *literally "the holy ones"* along with the "overseers and deacons."

- As a table, define holy. According to that definition, are you...holy?

Who are the "Overseers" and "Deacons:

The word ἐπισκόποις is translated "overseers" and is used seven times in the New Testament.

- 1 Peter 2:24-25 -
- Acts 20:28 -
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 -

Based on the above verse, what can we conclude about the "overseers?"

The word διακόνις is translated "deacon or deaconess" and is used 22 times.

- In the gospels it's translated most often as servant - i.e. Matthew 20:26
- In Acts and the remainder of the New Testament, it's often transliterated as Deacon or Deaconess (but still carries the meaning of servant).
 - Acts 6:1ff -

Read 1:3-11

In the opening of this letter, Paul visits four important topics (some of which will resurface again in the remainder of the letter):

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Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayers is _____. Richard Foster writes, *"By means of Intercessory Prayer God extends to each of us a personalized, hand-engraved invitation to become intimately involved in laboring for the well-being of others."*ⁱⁱⁱ Pastor Pete Greig reminds us that our prayers can be mostly about us, *"...but intercession requires [our] center of gravity to shift away from [our] own personal needs toward those of others."*^{iv}

- When you pray - what percentage of your prayers are for others?
- When you pray for others - is it filled with joy? Why/not?

Partnership in the Gospel

For St. Paul, the reason there is so much joy in his prayers, is because there is a *partnership*. Paul uses the word *κοινωνία* - a word which means (in) *common, fellowship, together*. In other words, there is community - a common unity (of mission).

- Matthew 28:18-20 -
- Ephesians 4:1-5 -
- Romans 12:15 -

Wrapping Up

Questions for the table:

- What's one thing that stood out today?
- In what ways could you be interceding for your friends and family?
- Share one prayer that each person can take home and pray.

ⁱ Peterson, Eugene *Eat this Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, 44

ⁱⁱ Ibid. 52, 53

ⁱⁱⁱ Foster, Richard *Prayer*, 201

^{iv} Greig, Pete *How to Pray: A Guide for Normal People*, 93