

NOVEMBER 2014

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

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

Philippians 2:5



The Book of Philippians:
Joy in the Journey

THE NEWBORN KING



A Christmas Devotional

New from Today in the Word

THE NEWBORN KING



A Christmas Devotional

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TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Are Christians Happier?



A recent study of the social media site Twitter compared the messages of atheists and believers.

Christians were more likely to use positive words like *love* and

happy, while atheists frequently used terms like *bad*, *wrong*, or *awful*. Researchers concluded that atheists are more likely to be skeptical or critical while Christians seem to be more optimistic and cheerful.

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul encourages fellow believers to be joyful: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (4:4). The word *joy* must be distinguished from the fleeting emotion of happiness. Happiness is often a result of our temporary circumstances, but the attribute of joy is grounded in spiritual certainty.

The apostle Paul was not experiencing a happy time in his life. He wrote this letter from prison, in chains, waiting for the courts to decide his fate. Rather than complaining or expressing concern for his own welfare, Paul sends this letter to encourage his friends in Philippi. It had been about ten years since Paul founded the church during the early part of his second missionary journey. The letter suggests that the church had been experiencing discord, because the Apostle urges them to remain in unity. Nevertheless, they had been faithful to Christ and to Paul,

supporting him through prayers and finances.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is one of the most beautiful in Scripture. If the letter reflected his physical circumstances, it might have been gloomy. But instead it is filled with deep joy and encouragement. As a follower of Christ we have assurance of God’s ultimate control, and we find peace in the hope of our eternal destination. That certainty produces joy.

Joy, we are told in Galatians, is a fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23). It is formed not by ourselves or by our circumstances but by God. These spiritual attributes are nourished within the body of believers. Perhaps that is why Paul emphasizes unity in this letter. Our connection to the church is vital to our spiritual health. We feed and support one another. Together, we remain joyful, even in difficulty.

This joy refuses to be shaken when life gets rough. God does not want us to “buck up” and “put on a good face” during trials. Rather, He wants us to know He is constant in our lives and present in times of trouble. We can depend on Him. We have hope because of Him.

Christians may not always be happy, but we can still be grounded in a deep and abiding sense of joy. It is relentless—a joy that doesn’t give up and refuses to quit. This is the joy that God produces within us.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



The Kenosis of Christ

In his book *Status Anxiety*, author Alain de Botton observes that the people we are most likely to envy are those who are most like us. It is easier to defer to someone we regard as superior than it is to give way to an equal. Yet those who follow Christ are commanded to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). Our role model for this practice of downward mobility is Jesus Christ who, although He was equal with God, “made himself nothing,” according to Philippians 2:7.

Some theologians have referred to this act of Christ as the *kenosis*, based on a Greek word in the phrase that is translated “made himself nothing.” A few versions translate it as “emptied Himself.” The Greek word can also mean “deprive,” a sense which seems to more accurately describe what took place during the incarnation. Jesus did not become “less” divine when He took on a human nature. Jesus was still God during His earthly ministry, but He did not exercise some of the attributes that belonged to His divine nature. For example, His physical presence was limited by space and time (John 11:1–6). His knowledge was limited in some measure, as was His strength (Matt. 24:36; John 4:6).

Christ “emptied” or made Himself “nothing” by being “made in human likeness” and by the obedience of His death on the cross (Phil. 2:7–8). When Paul says that Jesus was “found in appearance as a man,” we should not think that he means that Jesus merely appeared to be human. The apostle emphasizes that humanity was Jesus’ “very nature” (v. 7). Jesus was truly human, but He was also more than human. In Jesus, divine and human natures were both united in one person, each without altering the character of the other.

Jesus’ humbling was partial and temporary. Although He did not claim the glory and prerogatives that belonged to Him as God, He did retain the title of Lord and accepted worship (Matt. 14:33). Exaltation “to the highest place” following Jesus’ death was restoration to the place of glory that He previously held as much as it was a reward (cf. John 17:5). The aspect of reward is emphasized for our benefit to motivate us to follow His example: “if we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). In Christ “downward mobility” is really a call to higher living.

For Further Study

To learn more, read *A Hymn of Christ* by Ralph Martin (InterVarsity).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maftter

What We Are Grateful For

Thanksgiving has always been, and still is, my favorite holiday. Ever since I immigrated to the United States 24 years ago, this “American” holiday has become my favorite—no greeting cards, no gifts, no fancy clothes—just a gathering of family and friends around a dinner table and a simple thank you.

This holiday has also been for me a lesson in American history and an introduction to new food, rarely found in Europe: sweet potatoes and cranberry sauce (which didn’t look like potatoes or sauce). But what attracted me most about Thanksgiving is taking your eyes off what you don’t have, wanted to have, or will never have and, instead, focusing your mind on what you do have—and thank God for that. I found out that giving thanks is one of the best ways to take a deep breath, remember the Lord’s

mercies, change your perspective, and smile.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and talk about joy in our study this month, we’d like to thank our readers. They say the only eternal things we have here on earth are the Word of God and the people of God. We at *Today in the Word* have a wonderful opportunity to bring the study of God’s Word to the people of God. We are grateful for *Today in the Word* and for our readers who make this ministry possible with prayer and financial support. Thank you as well for your letters, emails, and phone calls.

We’d like to share with all of you some of the feedback we received from our readers this year. We hope it will encourage you as it did our *Today in the Word* team.

I just love the second volume of *Best of Today in the Word*. The print size is comfortable for reading. It is such a blessing to me!

– Nancy (via phone call)

I wanted to thank [the writer] Bryan Stewart for the work on the April issue. I enjoyed the devotions very much and shared a couple with a coworker and also with family. I can tell prayer goes into each issue. God bless you and keep up the good work.

– Ed (via email)

Today in the Word was advertised [in the *Moody Magazine*] and we received the first copy. We have been getting it ever since and have found it so helpful in so many ways. Both my husband and I are physically handicapped, so many of the devotional subjects are such an encouragement to us! Three years ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer. The surgeries and chemo left me weak and exhausted and I was rarely able to attend church. Your devotions meant even more to me then and gave me the

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Maffei

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John Koessler
Jamie Janosz

WRITER
Jamie Janosz

1-800-DL MOODY (356-6639)
www.moodyglobal.org



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TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Book of Philippians: Joy in the Journey

Most Americans think about the pursuit of happiness as an individual endeavor. It's a notion enshrined in our Declaration of Independence, and many people describe happiness as the primary goal of their lives. There's nothing wrong with happiness, of course, but the book of Philippians challenges Christians to pursue something else: joy.

This letter to the church in Philippi describes how joy is not just an individual choice—it's something that we should practice with other believers. No matter what our circumstances and no matter what our differences, we can and should rejoice! And when we rejoice together, we are a testimony to the world of the work of God in our lives.

The book also tells us that joy comes from following the example of Jesus. When we choose humility instead of pride, contentment instead of envy, and service instead of self, we will experience joy that transcends anything the world can understand. What a marvelous goal for our lives!

We are thankful that you are on this journey of following Jesus with us. Our goal each month is to help you read and understand more of God's Word so that you can become more like Christ. Your prayers and gifts make this ministry possible—and for that, we rejoice!

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Complete in God

The architect Antoni Gaudí started his work on the Sagrada Familia church in Barcelona in 1883. He worked on the magnificent building for the next forty years, but he died in 1926 with the work unfinished. The church remains incomplete today; some hope to have it finished by 2026, the centennial of Gaudí's death.

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi expressed confidence that his lifetime task—proclaiming the gospel of Christ—would be successfully completed. Paul and Timothy are identified as servants of Christ Jesus. The senders, God's "servants," and the recipients, God's "holy people" (v. 1), were linked by their devotion to God and His work.

A bond of mutual admiration existed between Paul, Timothy, and the people of the Philippian church. They had prayed and served together. Verse 6 describes Paul's heartfelt desire that the work that God began in their hearts would continue. It was

not just a fanciful wish, for Paul expressed confidence that growth in Christ would happen. God had taken hold of their lives, and Paul knew it would continue to mature.

These opening greetings set the tone for the entire book. While written to a specific church, the book of Philippians is an encouragement to believers today. We are assured that God who began a spiritual work in our life will complete it. Paul's letter encourages us to live with joy, even in the face of suffering. We do not have to do this alone. The text does not say "we" will carry out that work. The responsibility belongs to God.

We are the workmanship of God, from His creation of our bodies and souls to His work to bring us to saving faith. Our devotion to Him reflects the work of His Spirit in our lives. Our spiritual growth is evidence that we are being conformed to the image of His Son.

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6

Apply the Word

Most of us have unfinished projects, and it's easy to become discouraged at our inability to follow God consistently. Today, ask God to take charge and be the One to complete His work in your life. Surrender your ambition and plans fully to Him, place your life in His hands, and know that He can and will finish the work He began in you.

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers our Computer Support staff: James Anderson, Richard McNeill, Michael Paniak, and Steven Takushi. They help all departments on Moody's Chicago campus with their expertise and computer skills, and we are thankful for them.

Abounding Love

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian and pastor, was imprisoned for his resistance against the Nazi regime. Before he was executed, Bonhoeffer wrote from prison to his loved ones, “Please don’t ever get anxious or worry about me, but don’t forget to pray for me—I’m sure you don’t. I am so sure of God’s guiding hand that I hope I shall always be kept in that certainty.”

The apostle Paul drafted this letter during his imprisonment, which most scholars believe was in Rome. Despite his surroundings, the letter had a warm and personal tone as the Apostle greeted and comforted his friends. He was confident that the believers would continue in the faith because he had them in his heart and they were recipients of God’s grace (v. 7).

This letter, written from prison with the author in chains, exudes love, hope, and encouragement. Paul was convicted of God’s grace and the fellowship of believers despite his dire circumstances.

He refused to let his physical situation diminish his internal conviction.

Paul gave a specific prayer request. He did not ask them to pray for him, but rather he expressed his prayer for them. As our key verse states, Paul wanted their love to “abound.” The word *abound* implies significant, extravagant growth. Paul did not want their love to dry up or stay the same, but to increase exponentially.

And this is my
prayer: that your
love may abound.

Philippians 1:9

This was not just sentiment. Paul knew this type of love was rooted in knowledge and insight.

He wanted the love they received from God to result in a godly perspective that saw and understood life’s circumstances. This love discerns what is “pure and blameless” (v. 10), bringing glory to God.

Paul, with shackles on his hands, encouraged us to see life through God’s eyes and to love like Jesus.

Apply the Word

We are to love others like God loved us, even when life’s circumstances make it difficult to feel particularly loving. Begin your day with a prayer that God’s love, given so lavishly to you, will spill over onto others and bring glory to His Name. Through a smile, a word of encouragement or a helping hand, let His love “abound” in you today.

Pray with Us

Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, welcomes your prayers today for God’s blessing on Moody’s finances, as we strive to be good stewards of our resources using them wisely and efficiently.

Chains for Christ

Chuck Colson (1931–2012) was known as former President Richard Nixon’s “hatchet man.” He pled guilty in 1974 to Watergate-related charges. He shocked the entire nation when, in the midst of the political scandal and his following seven-month imprisonment, he declared his newfound faith in Jesus Christ. The *Boston Globe* wrote, “If Mr. Colson can repent of his sins, there just has to be hope for everybody.” Colson emerged from prison and devoted the rest of his life to serving God.

Throughout Scripture, God works through difficult circumstances to change lives and advance the gospel. That was certainly true in the life of the apostle Paul. He admonished his friends not to despair over what had happened but to recognize God’s divine hand in all circumstances, even unpleasant ones.

Paul had been imprisoned for dissension he had allegedly caused among the Jewish people in Jerusalem. One of the false charges was that he had brought Gentiles into the temple (see Acts 21). Roman guards

took him into custody at that time, and Paul was imprisoned for two years. He was transferred to Rome after he appealed to Caesar. He was placed under house arrest (Acts 25). Most scholars believe the book of Philippians was written while Paul was in house arrest in Rome.

What has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

Philippians 1:12

Despite being imprisoned, Paul had opportunities to further the message of Jesus Christ. He said that word of who he was and why he was in chains had spread “throughout the whole palace guard” (v. 13) and even beyond. Rather than silence his message,

Paul’s detainment made the message spread even further.

Rather than discourage the church, the apostle’s detainment gave Christ’s followers courage. It seemed to give them greater confidence and less fear. What seemed like devastation for the young church—the imprisonment of their key missionary—actually bolstered its effectiveness and power.

Apply the Word

Reading the lives of Christians who have suffered for the faith can inspire us to persevere under trial. Read a biography of a faithful Christian, one who saw God work through even the most difficult moments in life. Or review a book like *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*. Through their lives we clearly see that the glory of God can never be silenced.

Pray with Us

Year-end busy time is fast approaching for our Investment Accounting personnel, Daphne Hussey, Marilou Logan, Andrea Palmer-Reed, Tonya Reed, and Rohan Mclachlan. Please pray for health, wisdom, and energy for the team.

Christ Is Preached

Evangelist D. L. Moody was often criticized for his unconventional methods of evangelism. At the 1893 World's Fair, he rented a large circus tent to host his evening meetings. One woman complained about this, declaring the setting much too worldly. Moody asked her, "Well, how do you propose we do it?" The woman answered, "I don't do it!" Moody smiled. "Well," said the robust preacher, "I like my method of doing it better than your method of not doing it!"

The apostle Paul mentioned an issue here that is pertinent still today. He stated that we *should* preach the gospel—but is it important *how* we preach the gospel? Are some methods actually detrimental to God's message of salvation? Should believers be concerned or confront those who are using inappropriate means to advance the cause of Christ?

Paul gave a somewhat surprising answer. He acknowledged that some evangelize out of contradictory motives. Some view

Christian outreach as a sort of competition (v. 15). They want bigger numbers and better results, and they are jealous of those who look more successful. Others preach purely from goodwill. Both were evident in Paul's time, and they are still evident today.

Christ is preached.
And because of this
I rejoice.

Philippians 1:18

The Apostle knew some of this skepticism toward preachers was aimed at him. He asserted, however, "but what does it matter?" (v. 18). Paul insisted that the most important thing of all was that Christ is preached.

In his own preaching ministry Paul took care to guard his motives and use strategic methods to communicate the gospel (1 Thess. 2:3; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 9:19–23). He was critical of those whose motive for preaching was to enrich themselves (2 Cor. 11:7–8). Yet even when the true gospel was preached from poor motives, Paul was confident that God would use it to accomplish His own purpose. "Because of this," said Paul, "I rejoice" (v. 18).

Apply the Word

Do you preach Christ? You may not stand on a street corner or be imprisoned for your passionate proclamation of the Word. But you can preach Christ in what you do and say. In every interaction, look for an opportunity to give hope and point people to your Savior. Your message is important, no matter how fluently you deliver it. For that, we rejoice!

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer this important time in the lives of Moody students as they grow through the powerful messages during Spiritual Enrichment Week. Ask the Lord to draw them closer to Him and to learn from the week's teaching.

To Live Is Christ

On October 28, 1949, Jim Elliot wrote these words in his journal: “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Just a few years later in 1956, he and four other young missionaries would give up their lives for the gospel. The young men were killed in Ecuador by a tribe whom they were attempting to reach with God’s Word. They sacrificed their earthly lives for eternal gain.

The apostle Paul expressed this heavenly perspective on his life. Our lives on earth are

opportunities for us to serve God, realizing that we have eternal rewards of life with Christ to look forward to (v. 21).

Notice that the passage starts with a repeated phrase from yesterday: “I will continue to rejoice” (v. 18). This emphasis on rejoicing while undergoing suffering might strike us as an inappropriate response to a life

filled with trouble. Why would anyone rejoice during physical oppression? Here, Paul gave the reason. First, he realized it was only through the prayer support of fellow believers and God Himself that this suffering would have a positive result. He would be delivered, perhaps not in the physical sense, but spiritually (v. 19).

For to me, to live is
Christ and to die is
gain.

Philippians 1:21

He asked for courage to face what might lie ahead (v. 20). Note that he does not ask for boundless courage, but “sufficient” enough to face what may come: just enough. Again, this ability to stare down

trouble does not come from one’s personal resilience but from the knowledge that “Christ will be exalted in my body” (v. 20). This verse emphasizes that, according to worldly standards, Paul’s future could be dismal.

Paul was not ignorant of his circumstances. He realized his dedication to Christ might result in death. Yet even then, he would gain.

Apply the Word

If we truly lived in a way that reflected our key verse, how would our lives change? If it does not matter what the future holds, knowing that our future is in Christ, would anxiety be reduced? Would priorities be rearranged? Would we face challenges fearlessly? This verse will both comfort and challenge you to “continue to rejoice,” even in suffering.

Pray with Us

As Spiritual Enrichment Week continues on Moody’s Chicago campus, Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, invites you to thank God for the outstanding team of Moody faculty and for our students who make Moody a leader in Christian education.

To Remain for Christ

In C. S. Lewis's book *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, young Lucy sobs at the thought of leaving beloved Aslan: "It isn't Narnia, you know," she said. "It's you." Aslan assures the children that they will know him not just in Narnia but also back home. He says, "This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

Our longing to be with God is eloquently expressed by Paul in today's passage. If heaven is real and it is far more wonderful than our earthly existence, why would anyone want to remain on earth?

Paul said he remained on earth to continue his labor of preaching the gospel, mentoring believers, and encouraging the church. Imagine what might have happened if he had not followed through on his earthly charge? Who would have mentored Timothy? Who would have

written to Corinth? Paul's labor for God was widespread and long-lasting.

But Paul was realistic. He agreed that if he had the freedom to choose between earth and heaven, he would immediately "depart to be with Christ" (v. 23). Why? It is far better."

Scripture informs us of the glories of heaven, where we could dwell with God free from physical pain and suffering. Who wouldn't choose to depart immediately?

Paul's reason to stay is affirmed in verse 24: "It is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." The "you" refers to his fellow believers in Philippi. We have a duty to stay until God calls us home and to support one another in Christian community. This dependence within the body of Christ should be cherished. We do not live only for ourselves; it is a journey we share with other believers. Each person is significant and needed.

I desire to depart
and be with Christ,
which is better
by far.

Philippians 1:23

Apply the Word

Sometimes life is a struggle. Paul knew this, and he gives reason to persevere. We stay not because of ourselves but for others. This is an important reminder of Christian community. Reach out to a fellow believer today. Let them know they are important to you and how their presence makes a difference in your own life and journey.

Pray with Us

During your time of prayer, please mention Moody's publishing ministry under the leadership of Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications. Express gratitude to the Lord for giving Moody this ministry that uses the power of the printed word for His glory.

Faithful for Christ

In school, a true test of a child's behavior happens when the teacher steps out of the classroom. Before leaving, the teacher typically issues a stern warning to the class to behave while he or she was gone. Inevitably, however, the moment the door closes, students began doing things they wouldn't imagine doing if teacher were present. In the absence of authority, misbehavior seems inevitable.

The apostle Paul spoke here of his absence from the church of Philippi. It is clear that he was not sure when or if he would return. Unlike a teacher of misbehaving students, however, Paul was certain that the faithfulness that believers had exhibited in his presence would continue, even if he remained away. Their motivation did not come from trying to impress Paul but from their conviction of the truth of the gospel and their devotion to Christ.

Paul embodied faithfulness to God. He had just discussed how he was

"convinced" of needing to stay in this body as an example and encouragement to the body of Christ. He did not let his imprisonment cause bitterness or a change in behavior. Above all, he strove to remain faithful.

He used the phrase "whatever happens" (v. 27). It is impossible to predict precisely what believers will encounter. We have no guarantee of peace or safety. As Paul clearly demonstrated in his own life, bad things can and will happen. The challenge is to conduct ourselves in "a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (v. 27). In good times or in bad, in the presence of church members or not, we are examples of Christ and must remain devoted followers.

This type of consistent behavior drives out fear and promotes the faith. It demonstrates a lack of divisiveness among believers who are united in "one Spirit, striving together" (v. 28).

Conduct
yourselves in a
manner worthy
of the gospel
of Christ.

Philippians 1:27

Apply the Word

Do you let your circumstances or company affect your behavior? As followers of Christ, we are to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of our calling. That calls for unwavering commitment grounded in our faith in Christ. This type of discipline is the mark of a maturing Christian. Reflect today on how your behavior reflects the One you follow.

Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow, please pray for our publishing team, as they strive to expand the reach of Moody Publishers to new markets and audiences. Michele Forrider, Rene Hanebutt, James Hathaway, Roslyn Jordan, and Deborah Keiser welcome your prayers.

Suffering for Christ

In 2011, Asaia Bibi, a farm worker in Pakistan, was accused of blasphemy and taken before her town court for her belief in Jesus. This mother of five children remains in prison facing execution. She is not alone in this persecution. Recent reports estimate that Christians are discriminated against in 130 countries, and the number is steadily rising.

Followers of Jesus are not promised an easy or secure earthly existence. The apostle Paul, pointing to his personal hardships, said the suffering of believers and their perseverance through such trials would serve as a sign to others of God's power.

The Bible contains many passages about enduring trials for God. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial." We know that trials act as refining tools in our lives, causing believers to change behavior and to rely more wholeheartedly on God. But here

Paul pointed to another truth. When believers persevere and cling to God despite personal hardship, God is glorified, and their obedience serves as a sign to unbelievers.

Jesus Christ Himself was an example of suffering. He willingly accepted the fate of the cross and was crucified on our behalf. This ultimate example of undeserved punishment was recognized as a sign by unbelievers. The head soldier at the cross, observing Christ's death and what had been done to an innocent man, declared, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54).

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

Philippians 1:29

Belief and suffering are not mutually exclusive. They often accompany one another. As Paul said, we are not only to believe, "but also to suffer for him" (v. 29). The suffering, when withstood by faithful believers, points others to faith in Christ.

Apply the Word

We are not commanded to seek suffering, but we should not be surprised when we encounter it. Remember that your behavior in the midst of suffering is a testimony to the unbelievers around you. What you post on Facebook, what you say under pressure—these are noticed by those who know your life is marked by God.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for the Moody Publishers staff, please ask God to guide Natalie Hills, John Hinkley, Randall Payleitner, Duane Sherman, and Zack Williamson in seeking new authors and to give discernment in editorial decisions.

Walking in Community

Each year, crowds wearing pink shirts walk and run to support efforts to find a cure for breast cancer. Race for the Cure began in 1983 as a result of a promise Nancy Brinker made to her dying sister, Susan Komen. Nancy promised Susan she would do everything in her power to end the disease. Today, 1.6 million people participate in more than 150 races. They serve as a symbol of solidarity between survivors and loved ones. People run to show they are in this together.

Today's passage begins with the word "therefore,"

a signpost that encourages readers to reflect on the passage that precedes it. The "therefore" points to the reason that Paul could say, "being one in spirit and of one mind" (v. 3). Because of our common suffering and calling, we should find unity and fellowship within the body of Christ.

Chapter 1 concludes with a focus on suffering and faithfulness. We are to be will-

ing to suffer for God together *because* we believe in Him and for the sake of His glory. It is because of this commonality of faith and suffering, then, that we are called to love one another and act in unity. We are to encourage one another in faith.

This passage is a beautiful reminder that we are not called to faith simply as individuals but as a community. God does not want "Lone Ranger" Christians, facing trials alone. We are to live in relationship with fellow believers. Together we suffer. Together we have sinned. Together we are saved.

Paul reminded us we are not to look only to "our own interests" but to the "interests of the others" (v. 4).

Paul called us to act with tenderness, compassion, love, and humility—marching together and reflecting the glory of the One who redeemed us.

Make my joy
complete by being
like-minded, having
the same love.

Philippians 2:2

Apply the Word

Sometimes it's easy to feel out of touch with other believers. Some get hurt by their church community and withdraw into solitude; others get annoyed by a situation or personality. Remember that we have a bond that goes deeper than personal preferences and personalities; we are of "one spirit and of one mind" (v. 2) within the body of Christ.

Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, requests your prayers for the Stewardship Field Conference that begins today. Ask for traveling safety for the field representatives who come from all over the U.S. and for good teamwork for the week of the conference.

Humble like Christ

Are you humble? An article in the *Christian Post* suggested ten traits of humility: (1) ask for help; (2) give credit when due; (3) be quick to forgive; (4) show patience; (5) love peace; (6) live to serve; (7) give thanks; (8) apologize quickly; (9) admit weakness; and (10) receive God's correction. Such lists probably make us feel like we could use some more humility!

Today's passage is a powerful illustration of humility as it examines the depths of Christ's love for us. We are challenged to show that same love to one another. The frame of the passage is the first phrase: "In your relationships with one another" (v. 5). Paul is recounting the example of Jesus in order to address the way that believers should behave in relationships with each other.

We have shared a common suffering and a united purpose, and we are urged to walk in humility and to exhibit love within the body. Here, Paul sup-

plies the reason why. We are to follow the example of our Savior.

The passage includes basic theology about the person and nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus, in His "very nature," is God. Although Jesus is not the Father, He and the Father are One (John 10:30).

This is a specific claim to the deity of Christ—He is fully God and possesses the same divine attributes as the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Even though He is fully God, Jesus did not use it to His advantage (v.

6). We see examples in Scripture of Jesus' refusal to use His power for His own comfort or rescue. He resisted the temptation by Satan in the wilderness. He refused to be delivered from the Cross. Jesus was fully God, but He consistently humbled Himself.

We should emulate His example and live in humility. We are to think less of ourselves and more of others.

He made himself
nothing by taking
the very nature
of a servant.

Philippians 2:7

Apply the Word

It is our nature to be self-promoting. Today's verse is beautiful but challenging. How can we on a daily basis resist the urge to protect and to flatter ourselves at the expense of others? We must strive for the "mindset" of Christ Jesus (v. 5). Make this your goal today, to walk like Jesus in love and humility, putting the needs of others above your own.

Pray with Us

Would you remember before the Lord Moody's Human Resources staff in Chicago? Today, we invite you to pray for Jill Douglas, Mia Gale, Candra Michelle Garrett, and Luci Harris and ask the Lord to give them joy every day.

Our Exalted Lord

Mary Queen of Scots (1543–1587) was sentenced to death for treason. Before she was executed, she embroidered a tapestry to read, “In my end is my beginning.” Although her life was over, her legend would continue. Her famous saying is a well-known paradox. How can an end also be a beginning? Yet both statements were true. When Mary’s earthly body was extinguished, her fame had only begun.

Today’s passage reveals another paradox, the divine contradiction in the person and nature of Jesus Christ. He was both fully man and fully God. The passage begins by describing Jesus’s earthly characteristics. He was “in appearance” fully human (v. 8). There was nothing about his physical appearance to make people think He was divine. He was born into an ordinary family and grew up like other children.

Isaiah 53:3 says, “He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffer-

ing, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” Jesus also demonstrated His complete humility in the willing way He faced suffering and endured the pain of physical death. He was a portrait of complete obedience to God.

God exalted him to
the highest place
and gave him the
name that is above
every name.

Philippians 2:9

In the middle of today’s passage, Paul used the word “therefore” again. It was because of this demonstration of complete humility, therefore, that Christ was greatly exalted. Here is the paradox! In the person of

Christ we witness both utter humility and ultimate glory. Because of Jesus’ death on the cross—a cruel, humiliating, painful death—God highly exalted Him (v. 9). This man held in low esteem, traveling around a small geographic area with a ragtag band of followers, is the Lord of the universe who will rule “every tongue.” Those in heaven and earth will acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior!

Apply the Word

Most of us struggle to set aside pride. We want to protect our reputation and interests. We want to be sure we get what we deserve. Jesus models a different sort of response to this earthly existence. He accepted each task with humility, knowing His future held great glory. Pray that God will create this spirit of humility in you.

Pray with Us

Keeping the prayer focus on the Human Resources department, we ask for God’s blessings on Jean Jacobsen, Michael Lin, Peter Miller and Serene Hudson today. We are grateful for the help they provide to all employees at Moody.

Christ's Workmanship

The word *grumble* is an example of the grammatical term *onomatopoeia*: a word that sounds like what it means. A grumble sounds like a cross between growling and rumbling, clearly revealing your discontent. The word is derived from the Middle French word *grommeler*, which means to “mutter through your teeth.” In today's passage, we are told to resist grumbling or arguing as we “work out” our salvation.

We are told in Scripture that salvation is a gift from God, fully undeserved (Eph. 2:8–9). So why did Paul here instruct us to “work” it out? This imperative feels like a type of earning or validation of what God has done.

There is an important distinction, though. What Paul urged the Philippians to do was not to *earn* their salvation, but rather to allow God to continue to let it shape their lives and their behavior. As we seek God, He exposes those things that need

to be refined in our lives. The result of salvation is evident as God works in and through us. This is not an all-at-once process, but occurs over time.

Paul suggested we do this with “fear and trembling” (v. 12). Reverence is important when allowing God to intervene and alter our behavior. We may not always relish the idea or the experience. But we are to push on “in order to fulfill his good purpose” (v. 13).

We don't pursue God for personal glory but to reflect God in a “crooked generation” (v. 15). Because of this, we are to follow God without a negative attitude. What we say and do reflect on the work God is doing within us. We are reminded of Christ's sacrifice and Paul's own willingness to suffer. We should be encouraged and challenged by their examples of willingness to obey God without complaint.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Philippians 2:13

Apply the Word

We all are tempted to grumble about the difficulties of life. We complain about little things and big things—what we don't like about the weather, the problems with our health, the conflicts at our job. But we are called to be lights for God in a dark world, “blameless and pure” (v. 15). Today, ask God to take away your spirit of grumbling.

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, welcomes your prayers for Moody's efforts to reach the world for Christ through our media ministries, Moody Radio and Moody Publishers.

Shining Stars

Stars like our sun give off light, which is what enables us to see them from millions of miles away. The sun is our closest star, giving off light and heat that sustains life on Earth. Stars glow from heat, and the temperature of a star determines its color: cool stars are red, while the hottest stars glow white. Stars are only visible at night because during the day the sun is so bright it makes them invisible to us on Earth. The stars are a magnificent part of God's creation.

In today's passage, the apostle Paul said we will shine like stars in the sky. But unlike the stars, we are not lights in and of ourselves. We only reflect the God whom we serve. We will shine, he says in verse 16, as we "hold firmly" to the Word. When our lives are invested in God and His Word, we will begin to reflect the glory of God. When we join

with other believers, we will certainly attract attention!

Paul said this testimony of changed lives and shining believers is all the reward that he desires in life. His life's purpose was fulfilled when he looked at the testimony of the churches where he ministered. They proved that his efforts were not in vain (v. 16). Their faithfulness is his reward.

Then you will shine
among them like
the stars in the sky.

Philippians 2:15

Verse 17 includes a beautiful image of Paul's sacrifice. It is also an appropriate image of the sacrifice of our Savior. Both lives were "poured out" for us. They were emptied of themselves, their personal ambition, even their desires. They were given completely so that our faith could be made stronger. It would be worth it, Paul insisted. And even this great sacrifice should be cause for rejoicing. What a gift we are given!

Apply the Word

Do you shine like the stars? Do you base your success on your personal achievements or on the way your life reflects Christ? Paul's admonishment in this chapter should encourage us to invest ourselves fully in God's Word and to pray that He will be seen in our life and that people will see in us a compelling reflection of the God we serve.

Pray with Us

Today, we'd like to pray for the staff of Moody Radio South (WMFT)—Patrick Bosley, Rob Moore and John Rogers—who bless thousands of listeners in that area and around the world with solid biblical teaching and inspiring Christian music.

Timothy's Example

On the website “I am Second,” musicians, actors, business leaders, and politicians face the camera and describe how Jesus has influenced their lives. Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas who lost his bid to be the Republican presidential nominee, says, “The hardest time to follow Jesus is when you are successful. The easiest time is when you’re bot-tomed out.” At the end he concludes, “My name is Mike Huckabee, and I am Second.”

In today’s passage, Paul made an observation about the need of believers to place themselves second to Jesus Christ. This role is not human nature: “Everyone looks out for their own interests” (v. 21). We concentrate on what will make us happy. We pursue what we want out of life. We put a high premium on personal satisfaction.

I have no one
else like him, who
will show genuine
concern for your
welfare.

Philippians 2:20

Paul turned the tables on these values and pointed to an example of this behavior. He describes the selflessness of his friend Timothy: “There is no one else like him” (v. 20). Paul wanted Timothy to visit the church at Philippi because he knew this brother in Christ would not think of himself first but would want to care for this group of believers in any way possible.

Timothy was Paul’s son in the faith. He had disciples him and worked with him in ministry. He knew Timothy’s character and love for God and

His people. Such devotion to the church and to God is a desirable treasure. Paul mentioned its rarity here. In most situations, “everyone” looks out for themselves (v. 21). The choices Timothy made set him apart in Paul’s eyes as a true servant of God, one who was willing to put himself second and to put God first.

Apply the Word

Think about how putting yourself second would revolutionize your life and your relationships. Of course, we must begin by putting ourselves second to God. When we make pleasing Him our focus and willingly set aside our own self-protective interests, we will enter into a one-of-a-kind relationship with God.

Pray with Us

Please pray for Moody Radio South Florida (WRMB) and its staff: Audrey Altman, Rebecca Borgstrom, Eric Johnson, and Brigitte Sylvestre. Thank the Lord for all the changed lives and all the hearts turned to God through their ministry.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Professor of Jewish Studies and *Open Line* Host



In Judges 11:29–40, did Jephthah actually offer his daughter as a human sacrifice?



Jephthah vowed that if the Lord granted him success against the Ammonites, then whatever greeted him first upon his return, he would offer as a sacrificial burnt offering (Judg. 11:30–31). Much to his sorrow, Jephthah's daughter was the first to approach him. As a result, many conclude that Jephthah actually engaged in human sacrifice.

An alternative, and superior view, is that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter to lifetime service in the tabernacle, not as a burnt offering. The text says that Jephthah's daughter accepted her father's vow but asked to be allowed to go to the mountains and "weep ... because I will never marry" (Judg. 11:37). If she were going to be killed, she would have far more to lament than her perpetual virginity. After the two months were completed, Jephthah "did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin" (Judg. 11:39). Notice that the text does not say, "she was sacrificed as a burnt offering." Also, note the repeated emphasis on the unmarried, virginal state of Jephthah's daughter. Committing her to remain unmarried implied another kind of loss for Jephthah; verse 34 clarifies that "she was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter." So Jephthah did not keep his word literally by killing

his daughter, but rather he sacrificed his daughter by giving her to tabernacle service. As a result, he would not have any heirs.

Believers need to take the vows we make to the Lord seriously; like Jephthah, we are responsible to keep them even if it will require us to sacrifice our hopes and plans for life.



Did the medium at Endor actually bring Samuel up from the dead (1 Sam. 28:3–25)?



Before Saul's last battle with the Philistines, he wanted to consult with the deceased prophet Samuel. Contrary to the Law (Deut. 18:9–12), he disguised himself and visited a medium in the city of Endor. Surprisingly, Saul had previously been obedient to God's commands about mediums. The woman herself told the disguised Saul, "He has cut off the mediums and spiritists from the land" (1 Sam. 28:9). Yet there he was, visiting the medium.

Mediums are not able to call up the dead. They are generally frauds or, if able to engage in some kind of supernatural interaction, they communicate with familiar spirits, not dead people. But the medium at Endor was surprised: "When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice" (1 Sam. 28:12). On this occasion, it appears that the Lord

Continued on next page

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sent the spirit of Samuel from the dead to communicate with Saul. He did this so Samuel could tell Saul for the third time that the kingdom would be taken from him (cf. 1 Sam. 13:13–14; 15:26–28).

This is the finale of Saul’s kingship, which started with so much promise. Even this visit to the medium is an example of Saul undoing the good he had originally done—first removing the mediums in obedience to the Law and then visiting one himself. Being a self-willed man, he disobeyed the Lord repeatedly and ultimately lost his kingdom.

The great lesson here is not really about spiritism but rather the need for those who follow the Lord to finish well. We need to strive to be like the other Saul, Paul the apostle, who wrote as he faced death, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Q **Why did God strike Uzzah dead when he reached out to steady the ark of God after the oxen stumbled (2 Sam. 6:6–7)? He was only trying to help.**

A The Lord’s actions seem capricious and unkind. Even David became angry (2 Sam. 6:8). After all, they were transporting the ark on a new cart and worshipping the Lord while moving it.

Yet the Lord was not acting capriciously. Instead, David and those with him were being disobedient. The Law specifically required that the ark be moved by inserting “poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it” (Ex. 25:14–15). Those moving the ark were to treat it with reverence by lifting it with the poles and never touching the ark itself (Num. 4:15). David and those who moved the ark with him, including Uzzah, however, opted to use a cart for the sake of convenience rather than to obey God fully. Consequently, Uzzah was struck dead specifically “because of his irreverent act” (2 Sam. 6:7).

God’s actions may seem excessively harsh for a disobedience that resulted from Uzzah’s good intentions. But this perspective fails to take God’s holiness seriously and presumes upon His mercy. It is not as if God did not know that moving the ark on wheels would be more convenient. He understood the potential danger that carting the ark would bring and therefore required it to be carried on poles.

A righteous God requires absolute obedience and total reverence. Most often, God does not act based on His holiness but rather out of mercy. And because of His mercies, “we are not consumed” (Lam. 3:22). But in this exceptional case, to teach God’s people about His absolute holiness and the requirement of total obedience, Uzzah was struck dead.

Timothy's Encouragement

Believers often use familial terms to address each other. Bill and Gloria Gaither were inspired to write their song "The Family of God" after a fellow church member, a mechanic, was injured in a huge explosion. "Within minutes a chain of telephone calls alerted the family of God," Gloria said. The church organized to help with the children, bring meals, and even give blood transfusions. As the Gaithers' song described it, we are "Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod / For I'm part of the family, the family of God."

In today's passage, the apostle Paul referred to Timothy as his own "son" (v. 22). While Timothy and Paul were not related by blood, Timothy earned this term of endearment because he had proven himself a faithful companion and respected friend to Paul. Timothy had become more than just a coworker.

He was like a son as he "served with me in the work of the gospel" (v. 22).

Jesus also taught that family can extend beyond our blood relations. While on the cross, Jesus asked His disciple John to care for Jesus' own mother: "Woman, here is your son" (John 19:26). In Mark 3:35, Jesus broadened the view of family: "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Paul felt similarly about his fellow worker in faith, Timothy. They shared a common purpose and deep level of trust. Paul expressed confidence that Timothy would go to Philippi if and when he was asked. Paul then expressed his additional confidence that God was mindful of his own situation and that he would be released from prison alive and be able to visit soon (v. 24).

Timothy has
proved himself . . .
he has served with
me in the work of
the gospel.

Philippians 2:21

Apply the Word

Some of us are blessed by Christian families who support our beliefs and understand our devotion to Jesus. Others have family who fail to share their desire to serve God. In this passage, Paul reminds us that spiritual family extends beyond our relatives by blood. One important reason to attend a local church is to develop relationships within the family of God.

Pray with Us

Would you uphold in prayer Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's president, today? On behalf of Dr. Nyquist and the whole leadership team, please ask for the Lord's sustaining and renewing power on his ministry and leadership at Moody.

Faithful Soldier

Soldiers in the U.S. Army are charged to uphold seven values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. They are taught these values in their basic training and then expected to integrate them into everything they do—whether they are performing military duties or enjoying their personal life. It is understood that a soldier is never fully “off duty.”

Paul uses three distinct and meaningful titles for his friend Epaphroditus: “brother,” “fellow worker” and “fellow soldier” (v. 25). Each of these titles implies qualities that can also be used to describe the relationships we have with fellow believers.

The term *brother* is used throughout Scripture to describe the kinship we enjoy with other Christians as children of God. We are born again into this new family—and our connection runs deep. The title of brother implies a permanent responsibility to care for one another.

In referring to Epaphroditus as his “fellow worker,” Paul identified their common purpose in serving God. Because of this shared task Epaphroditus delivered a message to Paul, even though he himself was desperately ill (v. 27). Caring little for his own welfare, he finished the job, even to the point of death!

He longs for
all of you.

Philippians 2:26

The final term is *soldier*. Christians are to be soldiers of the Cross. That implies that we should be recognized for our loyalty to serving God. Soldiers show commitment to something be-

yond themselves, with a willingness to give their lives for the cause. Our cause is the gospel of Christ. Epaphroditus demonstrated all of these qualities to both Paul and the people of Philippi.

While Epaphroditus has only a brief mention in Scripture, he is a noteworthy example of one who understood and fully lived out his role within the body of Christ.

Apply the Word

Are you a friend, a brother, a fellow soldier, a faithful worker? These labels describe how well we understand our role as both a child of God and a loyal servant. Write down one title that you would like to describe your Christian character. Ask God to help you act in a manner that clearly demonstrates those qualities today.

Pray with Us

Today, as Moody students present the *Messiah* concert on the Chicago campus, uphold in prayer the Music department professors who give so much time and effort to this performance. Today we pray for David Gauger, Xiangtang Hong, Jori Jennings, and Brian Lee.

The Greatest Sacrifice

The United States sets aside Memorial Day each year in order to honor those who have given their lives on behalf of their country. Memorial Day was celebrated as early as 1866 as a way to commemorate those who died in the Civil War. May was selected because the most flowers were in bloom. The holiday was a somber one with formal invitations to “decorate the graves of the dead.”

Again, in today’s passage, Paul spoke of his “fellow soldier” Epaphroditus. These are the only verses in the New Testament that mention him, but he clearly made a deep and lasting impression upon Paul and the early church.

We are told in verses 27 and 30 that Epaphroditus almost died for the work of Christ. He was willing to lay down his own life in his efforts on behalf of Paul, his fellow believers, and God. He followed the example set by Jesus Himself that Paul cited earlier in this

chapter. Epaphroditus was humble and self-sacrificing.

Paul realized that when Epaphroditus saw the Philippian church, it would have positive results. Paul would be less anxious, and the Philippians would be glad. This man was not only brave, he brought joy to others. Paul reminded us that we need to appreciate people like Epaphroditus, who put others first and work tirelessly and sacrificially on behalf of the gospel.

He risked his life
to make up for the
help you yourselves
could not give me.

Philippians 2:30

We must notice when others do what we ourselves cannot do (v. 30). Christians are to support the full-time ministry workers among us, including pastors and missionaries. Their work deserves our profound respect, thankfulness, and support. Paul paid tribute to both Timothy and Epaphroditus, men who served him well, carried the common burden of the gospel, and acted sacrificially.

Apply the Word

Today, consider someone you know who is doing God’s work in a way that you cannot. If you are able, consider sending them a financial gift. But even if you cannot support them monetarily, take the time to write them a note of encouragement, letting them know you deeply appreciate the sacrifices they have made on behalf of the gospel.

Pray with Us

Again, please mention in your prayers the Music faculty on Moody’s Chicago campus—Jae Hyeok Jang, Betty-Ann Lynerd, Elizabeth Naegele, Gary Rownd, and H. E. Singley—as they help Moody students follow their calling of serving God through music.

Warning against Legalism

After being told multiple times not to put his fingers near the mouth of the shark, a ten-year-old boy had his finger bitten at the Australian Shark and Ray Centre. His school class was on a field trip. The Centre's representative said, "He had at least ten warnings about not touching the front of the shark's nose or in its mouth when somehow the boy jammed his finger in there." The boy, who was not seriously injured, would have been safe among the docile sharks if he had only heeded the warnings.

Watch out for
those dogs, those
evildoers.

Philippians 3:2

Paul issued a very stern warning in today's passage. What begins with a positive reminder to "rejoice" (v. 1) continues with the instruction to "watch out" (v. 2). Most commentators believe his warnings were aimed at a certain group of people, often called the Judaizers, who were emphasizing legalism within the early church.

Judaizers insisted that Gentile Christians adhere to their interpretation of the Mosaic Laws in order to be true followers of Christ. The necessity of circumcision had been debated since the earliest days of the church (see Acts 15). Paul believed that repeated warnings against this were in order. He gives three negative labels to the Judaizers: dogs, evildoers, and mutilators of the flesh. He contrasts this in verse 3 with the circumcision that happens inwardly through the power of God.

Transformation of our bodies, whether through circumcision or other external actions, is not what puts us in a right relationship with God. Our confidence only comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Paul warns against any attempt to burden others with our own requirements for salvation. We do not determine faith for others. We trust in God's work through Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Are Paul's warnings relevant today? Consider whether you put more confidence in keeping external rules—however good they may be—or in the work of God in your life. In the words of the song "In Christ Alone" by Stuart Townend, "In Christ alone my hope is found, / He is my light, my strength, my song; / ... My Comforter, my All in All, / Here in the love of Christ I stand."

Pray with Us

In conclusion of our prayers for the Music department faculty and staff, please lift up to God today Terry Strandt, Cynthia Uitermarkt, Un-Young Whang, Christopher Wheeler, and Lauren Quiles. May the Lord encourage them in their Christian walk!

Our Perfect Pedigree

Since 1877, more than 301,000 dogs from a wide variety of breeds have competed in the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, each hoping to be the one to capture the “Best of Breed” or “Best in Show” titles. “Best of Breed” is given to the dog in each breed who ranks above the others. They are judged according to how well they fit the very best characteristics of that particular breed. A perfect pedigree, the registered list of dog’s parents and grandparents for four or five generations, is usually considered essential for a dog to win.

Not having a
righteousness of
my own . . . but that
which is through
faith in Christ.

Philippians 3:9

ness. By all accounts, Paul would be found “faultless” (v. 6).

But in terms of his value to God, Paul counted all of this—every bit of his perfect pedigree—as “garbage” (v. 8). This is a strong word for something so valued by those around him! Paul’s pedigree, impressive to others, was nothing to him when compared to the value of knowing Christ. He would give it all up for God. Paul, who formerly lived a life characterized by extreme allegiance to the Law, now said this pursuit of holiness and purity apart from the work of Christ is worthless.

By all outward measures, the apostle Paul had a perfect pedigree. Here he outlined his qualifications. He was a Jewish male. He was circumcised. He was born into the tribe of Benjamin. He was a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (v. 5). He was an excellent Pharisee; he obeyed the letter of the Law and persecuted the early church with zealous-

Our righteousness does not come from our personal achievement. It does not come from genealogy. It is found in Christ alone. Only a life transformed by Christ is of value. All personal qualifications could be considered a loss when compared to the value of knowing Jesus Christ.

Apply the Word

Our culture says value lies in appearance, talent, skill, business success, or power. Even church culture can say value is based on whether we dress a certain way or volunteer the most hours. These things may not be inherently bad—unless they distract us from the true source of our value: being beloved by God and saved through Jesus.

Pray with Us

Would you mention while you pray Moody’s vice president and general counsel, Janet Stiven? Ask for wisdom, understanding, and grace as she and her team at the Legal department make sure Moody follows the laws of the land in everything we do.

Pressing On

The musical group Selah, featuring vocalists Todd Smith, Amy Perry, and Alan Hall, recorded an album and song titled, “Press On”: “When the choices are hard / when we’re battered and scarred / When we’ve given our all / In Jesus’ name, we press on.” The writer wrote the song for a friend wavering in his faith, encouraging him not to give up. In the words of the apostle Paul, we must “press on” in the face of difficulty.

In today’s passage, Paul explained why he counted his personal achievements as loss. He considered all of his attributes, no matter how prestigious, as worthless distractions compared to the pursuit of knowing God (v. 10). This reason, “to know God” seems too simple of an explanation, but it has wide-reaching implications. When we resist the temptation to think highly of ourselves, we are able to know Jesus more fully.

I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Philippians 3:12

The opposite must also be true. When we count our pedigree or achievements to our credit, we are prevented from fully knowing Christ. Paul said our knowledge of Christ will focus on His resurrection, His suffering, and His death (v. 10). We will be aware of both His great sacrifice and His incredible triumph. Paul used the word *participation* to describe our relationship with Christ’s sufferings and death. Participation in suffering was certainly present on Paul’s mind as he sat in prison.

Paul realized the sufferings of His Savior more fully as he found himself the object of intense persecution. But he also realized the “power of his resurrection” (v. 10). Knowing Jesus is not limited to knowing how to suffer. It also means having access to God’s power. Paul was able to “press on” not because of his own fortitude but because in Christ, he was strong.

Apply the Word

Press on. When life becomes more than we think we are able to bear, Paul urges us to remember that we serve a Savior who identifies with suffering. We are reminded to be comforted by the suffering of Jesus, and also to be bolstered by the power of the resurrection. This power allows us to press on when life is difficult.

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the team who serves at the Campus Post Office in Chicago: Anthony Harper, Michael Lathrop, and Jenny Matthews and ask that you uphold them in prayer today.

Called Upward

Gymnast Kerri Strug snapped two ligaments in her ankle in a bad landing on her first vault of the women's team competition during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Rather than give up the American team's opportunity to win the gold medal, she hopped on one leg and took her place in front of the vault. The audience collectively held their breath. Pushing aside pain, she ran full throttle, hurled her body over the vault, and executed a perfect landing. Wincing as she lifted her injured foot, she threw her arms up in triumph. She finished well!

Today's verses read like a motivational speech worthy of an Olympic athlete. Paul filled his letter with active verbs. In Scripture, the Christian life is often compared to a race, and here we see that same language. As we follow Christ, we are reaching forward, pressing onward, and moving upward. We are re-

minded not to look back and to refuse to stay still.

Paul explained that he himself had not yet laid hold of the prize. That prize would only be realized when he received the call home to glory. He reminded us that we are not at the finish line—we are in the thick of the race. This quality of perseverance was his one duty, his primary mission. He was putting all of his energy into following Christ.

As the opening illustration and Paul's life both indicated, running a race does not come without risk. We are often injured in the process. We grow tired and are tempted to look back. This type of following is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage to keep going when life gets difficult. Keeping our eternal destiny clearly in mind helps us keep reaching forward.

I press on toward
the goal.

Philippians 3:14

Apply the Word

Do you feel like giving up? All of us have days or even periods of time where problems seem to close in on us. It is at those times that it is crucial to draw on the power of Christ and press forward, reaching for the prize. We must resist getting discouraged by temporary circumstances but instead be ever mindful of our eternal calling.

Pray with Us

Keeping our prayer focus on the Campus Post Office, please include Victor Perez, Samuel Ramos, and Richard Tatina in your time with God today. May they be strengthened by God's love and grace in their day-to-day responsibilities at CPO.

Perfect in Christ

When can someone claim to be mature? Is it at age 16 when he gets a driver's license? Or at 18 when she can vote? Maybe it's when he gets married or when she has children. Or maybe it's when they sign on the line for a mortgage; perhaps maturity officially arrives with the first AARP card or retirement or the first grandchild. As life progresses, we realize that maturity usually isn't a fixed point. It's an ongoing process, with markers along the way that indicate our growth.

All of us, then,
who are mature
should take such a
view of things.

Philippians 3:15

In today's passage, the apostle Paul said if we are mature spiritually, we will reach forward and press to the prize. Spiritual maturity in part means that we acknowledge the ways that our lives are transformed by Christ and the prospect of a heavenly future. Spiritual maturity will affect the way we live.

Maturity is an ongoing process. When we stumble and falter in our Christian walk, God reveals this to us. Paul spoke of two ways God keeps us on track. One is that He reveals His will to us (v. 5). Believers have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell within them. This correction may take place through the promptings of the Spirit or through the instruction in His Word. As we read and pray, God reveals the ways we need to change. He reminds us of our heavenly calling. He prompts changes in our lives.

The second way we keep our eye on the prize is by examining the lives of others. Paul pointed to his own example for the people of Philippi. He kept in contact through friends and letters. He showed faithfulness despite suffering. He said by watching the godly and faithful actions of fellow believers, we mature in our own walk with Christ.

Apply the Word

Ask God to reveal to you whether you are keeping your eye on the prize. He shows this to you through the nudging of the Spirit, the study of His Word, or through the example of other believers. Is there a behavior God might be asking you to change? Is there a task He wants you to do? We can grow in spiritual maturity, no matter how old we are!

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, VP and dean of Moody Theological Seminary in Chicago, and Randall Dattoli, associate dean, request the prayers of the Moody community for the seminary's new degrees and venues to reach more students, both online and in classrooms.

Longing for Heaven

Evangelist D. L. Moody once said, “Surely it is not wrong for us to think and talk about Heaven. I like to find out all I can about it. I expect to live there through all eternity.” He compares our curiosity to the way we would feel about moving to a new home. “I would inquire about its climate, about the neighbors I would have, about everything, . . . Is it not natural that we should look and listen and try to find out who is already there and what is the route to take?”

Paul examined the reality of our two “homes”—our earthly existence and our heavenly future. He pointed to the example of those who have forgotten their heavenly calling and made their earthly lives the priority. When we do this, we become “enemies” of Christ (v. 18). Jesus’ death and resurrection was not to ensure our satisfaction on earth but to secure our heavenly future so that we can dwell with God.

Our citizenship is
in heaven.

Philippians 3:20

Paul urged believers to set their minds on heaven, where our true citizenship is. When we get to glory, we will be transformed. Our bodies will not be subject to the effects of sin. Our physical ailments will be gone and suffering will disappear. We will go from this humble state into a glorious one.

But the real reason to focus on heaven is not just because of our physical transformation. It is because our Savior, Jesus Christ, is there. We are not to fall in love with the things of this earth or be ruled by our appetites

because we are to recognize the rule of Christ. On earth, we crave personal glory and our appetites are never satisfied. In heaven, we will be fully conformed to Christ and finally realize His glory.

Apply the Word

Sometimes, the feelings of sadness and dissatisfaction we experience may actually be the tugging of our souls toward our eternal home. When life on earth seems overwhelming, remember that your true citizenship is in heaven. Keep your mind and heart focused on Jesus, knowing that only with our lives focused on Him will we truly feel at home.

Pray with Us

Please pray that Christopher Brooks, campus dean, and Paul Wilson, associate dean, at Moody Theological Seminary in Michigan would guide the student body with wisdom and servant hearts today and throughout the year.

Beloved Friends

Eleven-year-old Burmese refugee Soung Oo and nine-year-old Dante of Atlanta, Georgia, cannot speak each other's languages. Yet, the boys' friendship has inspired family, friends, and the international school where they attend. Despite differences, the fourth-grade boys bonded, fueled partially by their love of soccer. When Soung Oo would call Dante on the phone, the only word he knew was his friend's name. He would say, "Dante. Dante. Dante." But the language barrier did not stop their friendship. As Soung Oo says, "A million years, we be friends."

Today's passage is about friendship in the Lord—what should be the unshakeable bond between believers. We know from experience that members of a church are not immune from disagreements. It seemed that two women, Euodia and Syntyche, had clashed within the Philippian church. Here, Paul began with words of affection. He re-

minded the church in Phillipi that he loved and valued them, calling them his "joy and crown" (v. 1).

But Paul's joy was tempered by a word of stern advice. He urged the church to live in harmony. No matter their personal differences, it was not helpful for discord to fester among the body of Christ. The women, Euodia and Syntyche, were mentioned by name; they were both important to Paul's work and the ministry of the gospel. He commended their work on God's behalf. While he valued their contribution, they needed

to focus on Christ, not their own preferences or goals (v. 2). The phrase "the same mind in the Lord" should echo back to Paul's admonition in chapter 2: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (2:5). This is how to resolve personality clashes and conflict in the church: we follow the example of Jesus' humility in putting others before ourselves.

Be of the same
mind in the Lord.

Philippians 4:2

Apply the Word

Are you holding a grudge against another believer? Even minor differences need to be addressed in light of the mindset of Jesus. When we allow disagreements to become a priority, we are harming the effectiveness of the body of Christ. Seek today to resolve your differences with that person. Approach them with a spirit of humility and reconciliation.

Pray with Us

Today, would you join us in prayer for the growing ministry of Moody Distance Learning? Headed by vice president and dean, Dr. James Spencer, Moody Distance Learning offers several degrees and certificates to students anywhere in the world.

Rejoice in the Lord

In a leper colony near Johannesburg, a man named Salakwandza Zulu rejoiced despite intense suffering. He had lost one leg and his sight to the disease. His second leg needed to be amputated to save his life. During the operation, between sobs, he sang hymns, saying, “Those dead legs were of no use to me anyway.” Even after he was free from symptoms of leprosy, he remained at the colony to encourage others. One person remarked of Salakwandza, “He lived a victorious Christian life, rejoicing in the Lord, and his life was an inspiration to all around him.”

Rejoice in the Lord
always. I will say it
again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

on outward circumstances does not go unnoticed. It is God-filled.

Paul said that a Christ-centered life is also marked by a gentle spirit. These qualities of joy and gentleness are marks of a believer. How do you attain this type of attitude even during trials?

Whether suffering comes through physical ailments or outward circumstance, Paul gave the answer in this passage. We should not focus on worries and anxieties. A Christ-centered life means we take every problem to God.

Today’s verse is a favorite, and one to commit to memory, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice” (v. 4). The apostle Paul knew intense suffering. He had been put on trial and imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Even while he was in chains, he rejoiced. Such joy that refuses to be dependent

We acknowledge God’s control and know that our lives are safe in His hand. We make our requests through prayer, thanking God for His provision. When we do this, we will experience a supernatural peace that will shock those around us. Even in great trauma, we will be able to rejoice knowing our God is in control.

Apply the Word

Make a practice of unburdening your anxieties to God. By giving Him the burdens weighing on your heart, you are acknowledging His supreme control over every situation. Laying down the weight of your problems will give you peace and the ability to rejoice, even when it doesn’t make sense. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Pray with Us

Chris Burdick, Courtney Gaines, Adam Grandy, Noelle Bud, and David Quigley use digital media to expand Moody’s outreach through radio, websites, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets. They welcome your prayers as they serve Moody’s ministries.

Righteous Thinking

South Africa has a tourist attraction in Mpumalanga called “God’s Window.” Standing on the edge of a cliff, one can gaze down into an exotic ravine. Mpumalanga has many breathtaking views, but this panorama of a wildlife reserve makes observers feel as though they are looking as far as the eye can see. Painters, photographers, and people from all over the world have spent hours reflecting on this beautiful view of God’s creation.

Today’s passage is not a list of things to do or ways to act, but an encouragement to dwell in God, to spend time admiring and gazing upon the beautiful qualities that are part of His eternal nature. Paul begins the passage with “Finally” (v. 8). He is approaching the end of his letter, which has encouraged the church to stand firm, remain committed, and rejoice in suffering.

This particular section reminds them of the beauty and wonder of the God

we serve. Paul used the words: “true,” “noble,” “right,” “pure,” “lovely,” and “admirable.” Paul emphasizes the wide scope of beauty and praise available to believers—anything that is excellent and praiseworthy is something that we can enjoy and give attention to. From nature to the arts to worship to relationships, the loveliness and beauty around us should remind us of God’s outpouring of His own truth and beauty in our lives and in our world.

If anything is
excellent or
praiseworthy—think
about such things.

Philippians 4:8

When we dwell on the beauty and wonder of God, we are drawn closer to who He would like us to be. We are to remember what we have learned about God from His Word and practice these things. We are to be conformed to the image of Christ, and all the good and positive things reflected in His character. This is one way that the “God of peace” will be with us (v. 9).

Apply the Word

What is your mind dwelling on today? Are you thinking about concerns, worries, problems, anxieties? We have been told instead to refocus our mind on what is pure and good and true. Reject the tendency we have to be mired in earthly troubles and try to refocus your mind on the things of God. Then, we will discover God’s peace dwelling in us.

Pray with Us

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, requests your prayer today for the Operations staff who keep our Chicago campus ministries running efficiently. Thank the Lord for the work that often goes behind the scenes but always glorifies Him!

Content in Him

One blogger wrote about her decision to accept a “contentment challenge.” For three months, she decided to give up shopping for clothes, accessories, household décor, and miscellaneous “stuff” in order to focus her heart and mind on contentment. “Am I crazy? Maybe. Do I need to do this? No . . . and Yes!” wrote Nancy Ray. “I need to do this because the Lord is calling me to this, and because I want to solidify the lessons of truth I’ve learned. I am seeking a life of true contentment and will not settle for anything less!”

The apostle Paul also had to find contentment. Remember that he is saying this from his current circumstances of being imprisoned! Whether living in prosperity or poverty, he had found a way to be content no matter his circumstances (v. 12).

The word *contentment* focuses on the state of our heart and mind, not our ex-

ternal situation. Like yesterday’s verse that talked about the focus of our minds, the state of being content is a spiritual discipline. We are often pressed toward an attitude of discontent. We look at what others have around us or what we feel is lacking in our lives. This can happen whether we are dwelling in humble means or enjoying prosperity. Neither having more nor having less guarantees satisfaction.

I have learned
to be content
whatever the
circumstances.

Philippians 4:11

The secret to this attitude of contentment lies in finding our strength and satisfaction in Christ alone. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us physically, mentally, and emotionally (v. 13). Having the mind of Christ, with a focus on humility and our eternal destiny, allows us to be content. Satisfaction is not found in our own achievements, possessions, or circumstances but in Him alone.

Apply the Word

Consider whether or not it would be helpful to do your own version of the contentment challenge. What might you give up in order to replace it with a focus on God and His Word? What thought process do you need to set aside and replace with an attitude of thankfulness for what you have already been given?

Pray with Us

For the next three days we’ll pray for our Facilities staff members who take such good care of our campus property in Chicago. We are grateful for the service of William Bielawski, Andrew Franklin, John Pettett, Thomas Pizano, and Cathy Sywulka.

Sharing in Affliction

A woman about to undergo surgery for breast cancer gained national attention last year when a video captured her uncharacteristic response to her approaching operation. Refusing to give in to fear, she asked that music be played, and she began to dance in the pre-operating room. Her nurses, anesthesiologist, and doctors joined in. Friends and family participated via Skype. Anyone watching would think they were witnessing a party, not the serious moments leading up to an operation. Together, in an unexpected and joyful way, they shared in her affliction.

The apostle Paul thanks the believers in Philippi for the ways they have shared in his affliction. Apparently, they had a long history of care and compassion for him throughout his many sufferings, for which he was deeply thankful. He reminded them that when he first preached the gospel, they were the only ones who stood by him.

They had also financially supported him, supplying his physical needs as he undertook his God-given task. This was not a one-time display of charity but an ongoing participation in the work of his ministry. Notably, Paul says that he did not desire the gift itself; rather, he desired what the gift did for the one who sent it. He knew that by giving we receive blessing. This is consistent with the message of Scripture, which teaches that God loves a cheerful giver. When we give, we receive back more than we have given.

It was good of
you to share in my
troubles.

Philippians 4:14

What good friends the people of Philippi were to Paul! They were with him from the very beginning. They did not refuse or forget any of his needs. Even in the end, during this time of imprisonment, they stood by his side, sending everything he needed through their friend Epaphroditus.

Apply the Word

Who needs your support today? You might need to give a call to someone facing surgery or suffering through a long illness. Perhaps you know someone who would appreciate a visit. Or a family could benefit from a financial gift, bag of groceries, or helping hand. Whether your gift is financial, emotional, or physical, your generosity will be greatly rewarded.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for Moody's Facilities personnel today, we ask for God's blessing on their lives and protection at the workplace for John Williams, Do Tran, Oakley Smith, Jessica Manning, Danny Hutcherson, and Paul Henle.

Riches of His Glory

A group of California firefighters were waiting to pay for groceries when they received an emergency call. They immediately left the store and their grocery cart to respond. When they returned, a stranger had paid for their groceries and left a note. It said, “Thank you firefighters for all you do. An Air Force wife.” She expressed her appreciation for the people who sacrifice their personal safety on behalf of others.

Paul just finished thanking the Philippians for the generosity they have shown. They had shared with him financially and emotionally, supporting him throughout his ministry career. Here, he reminded them that we all have access to this type of generosity from God.

This verse is a favorite for many: “My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (v. 19). It is comforting to lean

on this promise, knowing we have an all-powerful God of abundant riches. But why doesn’t God supply everyone’s needs? If this verse is true, why does poverty exist?

The final phrase of this verse is critical to understanding the text. God is

not saying He operates like a cash machine. The riches of His glory are not only material; God’s riches include joy, peace, love, harmony, faithfulness—all qualities we’ve seen described throughout our study of this letter this month. These are

the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus, who is the ultimate gift of God to meet our need of salvation from sin and relationship with God.

When we ask God to meet our needs, we must trust He knows how this will be done. It may not fulfill our expressed desires, but will be done according to the riches He alone can give.

**My God will meet
all your needs.**

Philippians 4:19

Apply the Word

Make a list of the needs most pressing on your heart. Now repeat this verse, knowing that God alone can meet those needs. When you pray, try not to tell God how you would like your prayers answered. Rather, ask Him to supply your needs in the way He sees fit. Trusting God with our deepest needs allows Him to work in ways beyond our imagination.

Pray with Us

While praying today, please thank the Lord with us for the faithful service of David Applington, David Boskovic, Ernest Brown, Ramon Diaz, and Dean Gentry—our custodians—who make Moody’s Chicago campus a clean and attractive environment.

The People of God

Many churches have a tradition of having visitors fill out a visitors' card that states their names and their home churches. During a time of welcome, the cards are read aloud for the congregation to hear the names of those who are visiting. The visitors have the opportunity to bring greetings from their home churches. This tradition is rooted in the acknowledgement of the common bond in Christ that is shared by churches all over the world.

Paul closed his letter to the Philippians with a series of greetings to the saints of Jesus Christ. He mentions both the people of God who are in Philippi and the people of God with him in Rome who sent their greetings. No matter where they were geographically and no matter what their material circumstances, they shared the bond of being "in Christ Jesus" (v. 21).

In verse 22, Paul sent greetings to the church from believers he had

met in prison. Some were imprisoned alongside of him, but his other greetings came from "those who belong to Caesar's household." The household of Caesar referred to any of the persons, slaves or free, living within the palace. Being a member of Caesar's household, no matter what the rank, gave a person

a certain amount of privilege. How the message of Christianity infiltrated the ranks of Caesar is not known, but Paul had met like-minded believers even in that unlikely setting.

Paul concluded this book with greetings that emphasized the value of Christian community. As we rejoice in our Savior, we also recognize the value of our deep connection with fellow believers. They support us, pray with us, and rejoice with us, in good times and in bad. The friendship of the saints is utterly vital to our Christian walk.

All God's people
here send you
greetings.

Philippians 4:22

Apply the Word

Philippians reminds us to have the mind of Christ, to rejoice in Him no matter our circumstances, and to pursue fellowship with believers even when it requires us to set aside our personal preferences. Which key theme from this letter is God emphasizing for you? Ask the Holy Spirit to allow His Word to shape your life to become more like Christ.

Pray with Us

On this last day of the month, let's reflect on this month's devotional topic from the book of Philippians and praise God that we can have joy in Him because of His love and His truth.

FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

courage and peace to continue on. Often, when I was feeling that I couldn't do another treatment, the devotional for that day gave me the lift I needed to hang in there. My cancer was a very aggressive one so the treatments had to be aggressive as well, which meant I had to spend many days in bed with my Bible and *Today in the Word* by my side. I've been cancer free for a year now and I look forward to going on with my life and being the encouragement others need to come through this. I look forward to many more years of benefiting from people with more knowledge and more insight and the ability of introducing fresh insights into Scripture that I've known for years. Thank you for *Today in the Word*, we appreciate it so much.

– Carol, Fruitvale, Canada

Today's word was about moving. I am moving after a divorce, and I am unemployed right now. The words in the reading gave me comfort, knowing that God is with me always. I believe God brought me to the specific message that He wanted me to hear. Keep up the good work you are doing, blessing and reassuring your readers that God loves them and will never let them go.

– Gordon (via website)

Today in the Word has been very inspirational to us, inmates at Cook County Department of Corrections. I'm trying to help win lost souls around here. I thank God for your *Today in the Word*. I read it every night in Deck Prayer that we have at 8:45 p.m., Monday through Sunday, with my brothers in jail.

– Charles, Chicago, IL

Dear readers, you can contact *Today in the Word* on our website www.todayintheword.com, by calling us at 1-800-356-6639, or on the *Today in the Word* page on Facebook and Twitter. We look forward to hearing from you!

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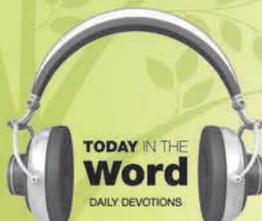
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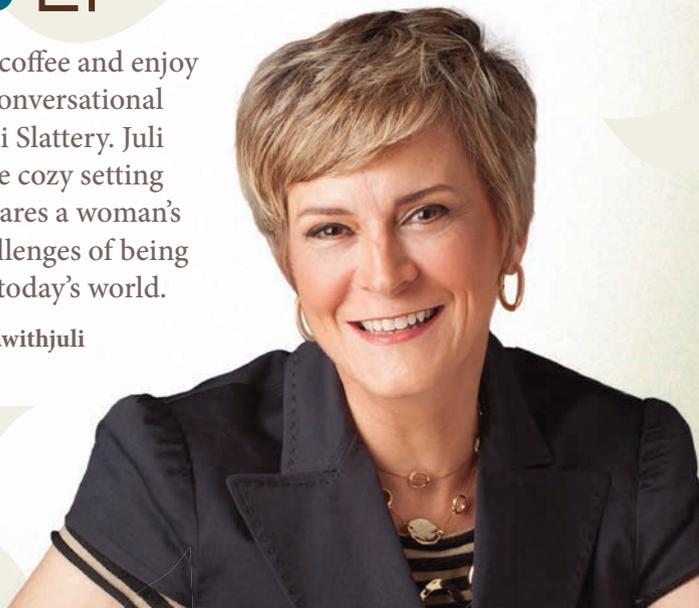
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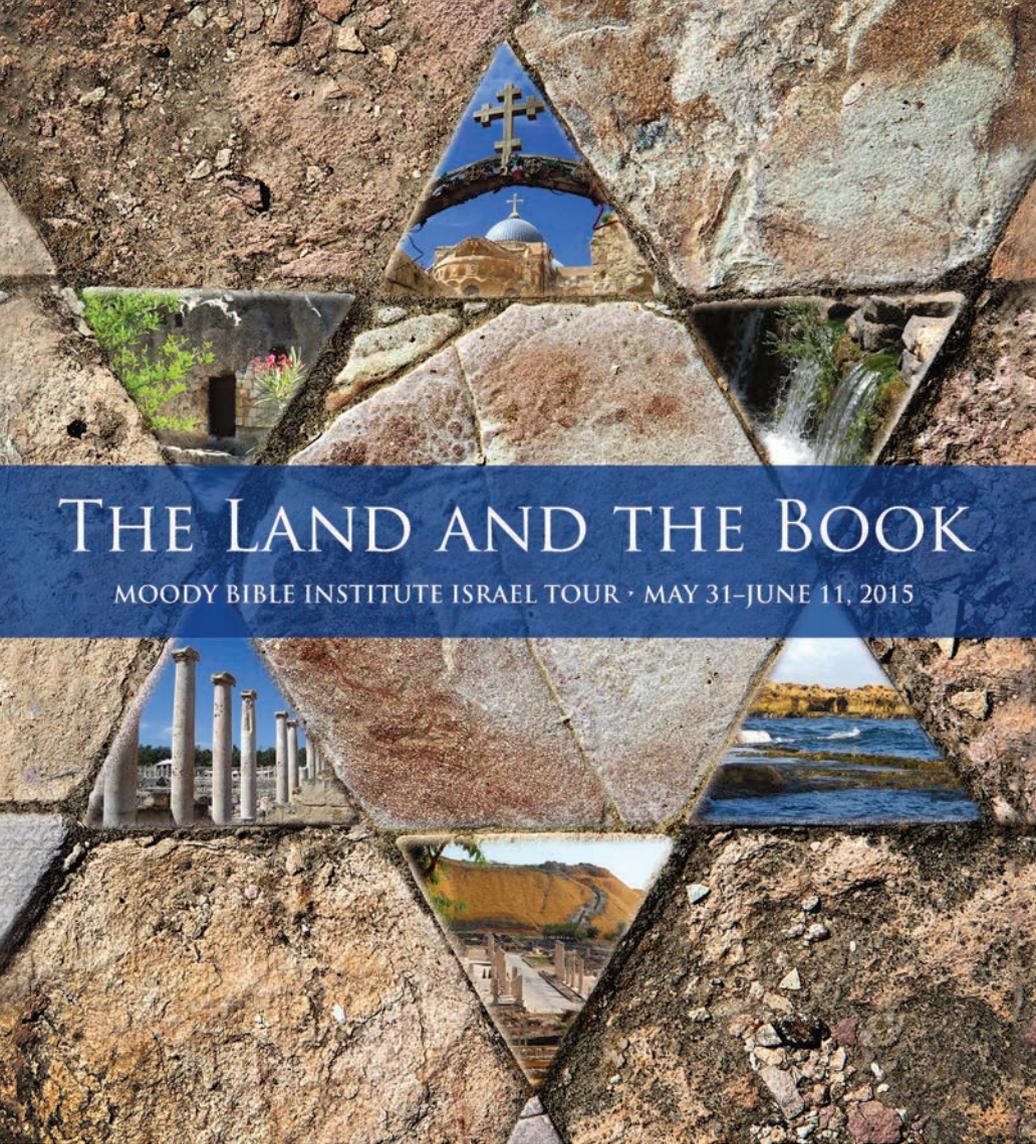
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