



**natalie abbott and vera schmitz**

# **Dwell on These Things**

**TRANSFORM YOUR HEART AND MIND  
BY MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD**

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Brentwood, Tennessee

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# Contents

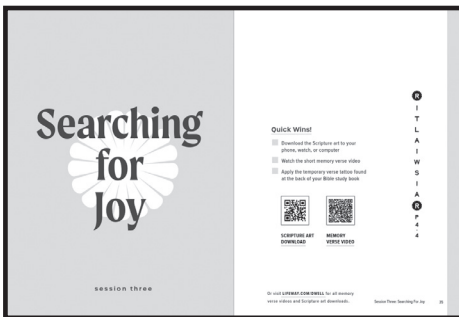
How to Use	4
About the Authors	6
Author Letter	7
<b>Session One</b>	
INTRODUCTION	8
<b>Session Two</b>	
WHY WE'RE HERE	10
<b>Session Three</b>	
SEARCHING FOR JOY	34
<b>Session Four</b>	
GENTLE AND NEAR	60
<b>Session Five</b>	
DON'T BE ANXIOUS	84
<b>Session Six</b>	
SAFE HEARTS AND MINDS	110
<b>Session Seven</b>	
WE'RE NEVER NOT THINKING	136
<b>Session Eight</b>	
LEARN FROM ME	164
How to Become a Christian	188
Endnotes	189
Video Redemption	193

# How to Use

## GETTING STARTED

Welcome to *Dwell on These Things*! We're so glad you've chosen to do this study. Because we believe discipleship happens best in community, we encourage you to do this study together in a group setting. Or, if you're doing this alone, consider enlisting a friend or two to go through it at the same time. This will give you study friends to pray with and connect with over coffee or through text or email so you can chat about what you're learning.

Here's a look at what you can expect to find in this study.



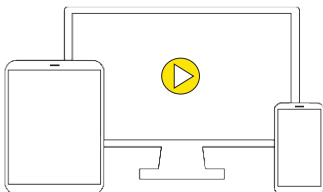
## OPENING SPREAD + QUICK WINS

This page provides an overview of all the elements involved in each week of study. You'll find prompts, instructions, QR codes, and a first look at the temporary tattoo design.

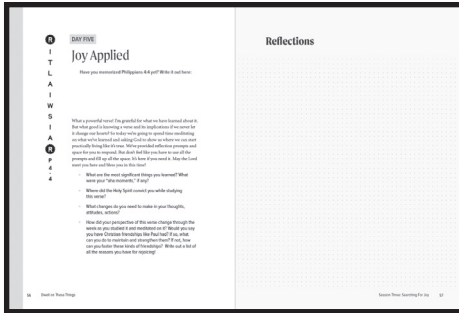


## PERSONAL STUDY

Each week features five days of personal study. You'll find questions to help you understand and apply the text, plus insightful commentary to clarify your study.

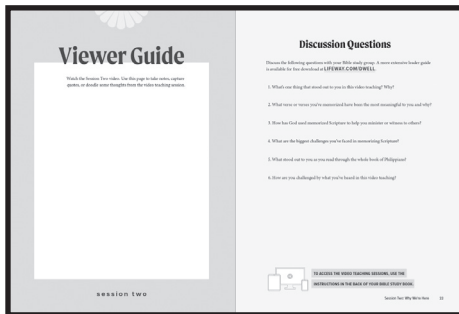


TO ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS, USE THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.



## REFLECTIONS

These pages provide space for you to process and apply what you've learned during the week, plus space to interact and practice your Scripture memory with the verse designs.



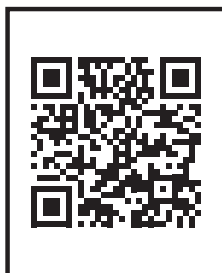
## VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On this spread, you'll be able to take notes during the video teaching and find questions to help you internalize and apply what you've heard. These pages will drive the video teaching discussion with your group.



## TEMPORARY VERSE TATTOOS

A unique resource connected to this study are temporary tattoos that help you memorize Scripture. You'll find those tattoos on a perforated card at the back of this book.



## LEADING A GROUP?

A free leader guide PDF is available for download at [lifeway.com/dwell](http://lifeway.com/dwell). The leader guide offers several tips and helps along with discussion guides for each week. You'll also find free downloadable resources to help you promote the study in your church or neighborhood, including: an invitation card, promotional poster, bulletin insert, and PowerPoint® template.



## Natalie Abbott

Hey, I'm Natalie. I've got five kids, and I'm married to Jason, who's a pastor. So we are full-on Jesus freaks over here! I love summer and Earl Gray tea and the Bible and fiction and poetry and pretty much all the words! I write for *Dwell Differently* and host our podcast among other things. It is seriously my dream job. I get to work with my ridiculous sister and tell people about Jesus! Who could ask for anything more!?!



## Vera Schmitz

What's up! I'm Vera, married to my college sweetheart, Matt, and mom to two boys. My favorite part of *Dwell Differently* is watching how a verse can come alive artistically, and then to see how it impacts the lives of our team, followers, and members. Thank you for letting us be a part of your walk with God—I can truly say it is one of the greatest honors of my life!

# Author Letter

## HEY FRIEND,

We're Natalie and Vera—sisters who love swapping clothes (yes, we still do that!), our mom's buttery homemade tortillas, and staying up way too late gabbing while we repeat for the hundredth time, "just five more minutes." We have so many shared passions, but what really binds us together is our love for Jesus and His Word. So, often you'll find us sipping tea and talking about real life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—all through the lens of our faith.

We want to invite you into that conversation in this study.

We are going to dig into Philippians 4:4-9 and study it together. And we want to help you engage both your head and your heart, letting God's truth sink in and transform you. So, we'll be memorizing and meditating on these verses right alongside you, and talking about how God is challenging, encouraging, and changing us by the power of His Word through the Holy Spirit. Our hope is that our stories will help you consider how these verses are impacting you too. Going forward, Natalie will be leading you in the written portion of the study, Vera will be showing you how to use the designs to memorize each Bible verse, and we'll both join you on the videos. We can't wait to discover the good things God has for us as we dwell on His Word together.

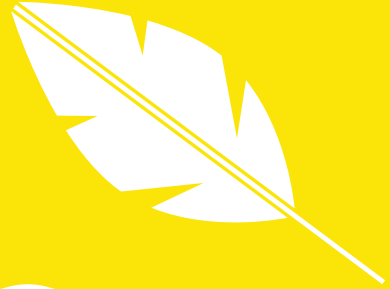
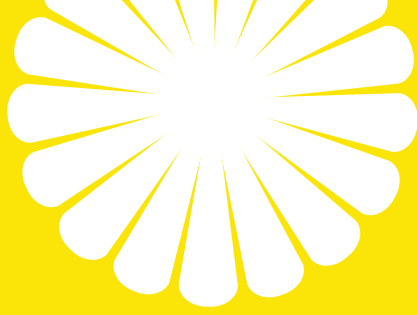
Thanks for joining us!

*Natalie & Vera*

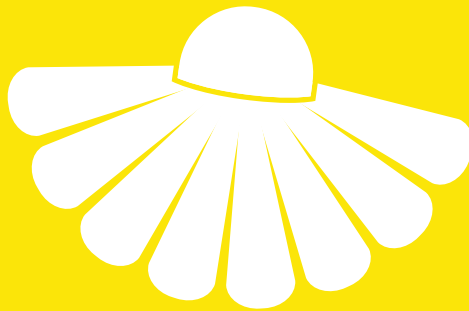
P.S. If you want to find out more about us, you can find us on all the socials (@dwelldifferently), on our podcast (*The Dwell Differently Podcast*), or at [dwelldifferently.com](http://dwelldifferently.com). We show up in those places to help people memorize one Bible verse a month—talking about what it means, why it matters, and how it's impacting our everyday lives.







# Introduction



session one

# Introduction

Watch the Session One video and take notes below.

## Discussion Questions

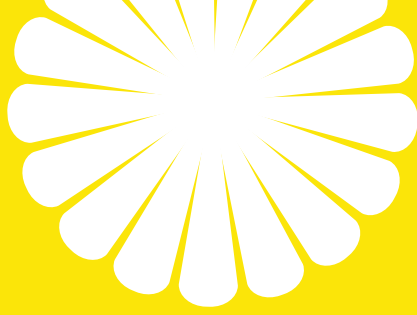
Discuss the following questions with your Bible study group. A more extensive leader guide is available for free download at [LIFEWAY.COM/DWELL](https://www.lifeway.com/dwell).

1. What's one thing that stood out to you in this video teaching? Why?
2. What part of Natalie's or Vera's testimony did you most resonate with and why?
3. What has been your history with memorizing Scripture?
4. What emotions are you experiencing as you begin this study?
5. What is appealing to you about this approach to Scripture memory?
6. How are you challenged by what you've heard in this video teaching?



**TO ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS, USE THE**

**INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.**



# Why We're Here



session two

## Quick Win!

This is our starting spot each week. You'll get the prompts you need to hit the ground running in knowing and memorizing each verse of Philippians 4:4-9. Today, we just want you to get familiar with the process and introduce the study. So check out the introductory video and let's get going!

- Watch the short introductory video



**INTRODUCTION:  
SCRIPTURE MEMORY  
METHOD**

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Or visit [LIFEWAY.COM/DWELL](https://www.lifeway.com/dwell) for  
all memory verse videos and Scripture art downloads.

# Set Up for Success

## WHY SHOULD I MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE?

That's a valid question. In a world where we have quick access to Bibles on our phones, why do we need God's Word in our heads? We can listen to the Bible and podcasts about the Bible whenever we want to. There are probably enough study guides like this one to fill up every day of the year for the rest of our lives. You can find or buy commentaries and resources to help you spend a lifetime learning about the Bible. There's even great biblical content on the internet (if you look in the right places). For most of us, God's Word is available everywhere all around us.

But access doesn't equal intimacy or application. Availability doesn't always translate to treasuring. Do you really have it with you all the time like you think you do?

Or is it just in your pocket or on your nightstand? Are you constantly dwelling on God's Word? Are His words the ones you know by heart—at the ready when you wake up with worry, or when your friend is going through something hard, or when you're scrolling through the story of your life, telling yourself who you are, what really matters, and what you're on this earth to do? Memorizing Scripture is part of what it looks like to have the Bible with you wherever you go. It means storing it in your mind and heart.

**So let me ask you, *Why do you want to memorize Scripture?* I'm not looking for the "right" answer; I'm looking for *your* answer. *Why are you here?***

Let me tell you why I am.

- I memorize Scripture because I need it. Like all the time.
- I need God's words in me speaking a better word than the words I hear from the world around me and the words I tell myself.
- I need truth to fight the lies I tend to believe.
- I need a sword to cut through the layers of my self-deception and expose the hidden sins that fester in the dark corners of my heart.
- I need the gospel of grace to pull me off the hamster wheel of trying to earn my keep with God.
- I need the security of God's love when I look in the mirror or scroll my socials.
- I need the bright light of God's Word to direct my path when I have no idea where to go.
- I need His faithful promises when my heart is heavy from praying the same prayer for years on end.
- I need a shield around me, reminding me at every blind corner that God is there with me, in control and at the ready.
- I need to hear God speaking to me in every situation and every need in real time.
- I need God's Word in me because I need God Himself!

That's why I memorize God's words, and that's why I keep on learning more and more of them. I need new words for new seasons, so that in every season I'm aware that God is walking with me and talking to me. What better thing is there?

It's the *one thing* I want to give you in this study.

This is my unswerving mission (Vera's too!)—to give everyone we can this *one thing*, the actual thing, not just a study of the thing or a book about the thing, but the thing itself: God's Word. We are desperate to give it to you. So, we've done everything we possibly can to help make memorizing Bible verses easy. We want you to walk away from this study, not just knowing *about* God's Word but actually *knowing* it, word for word. Long after this book has been recycled into paper towels and coffee filters, we hope God's words (not ours) still remain, bringing about all the good things only God can bring about in you.

## **YOUR THOUGHTS**

Do you have a favorite Bible verse that you've memorized? What is it?  
Why is it your favorite?

Why do you think memorizing Bible verses is good or beneficial?

Do you experience any hesitations or hang-ups about memorizing Scripture?  
Why? What's one practical thing you can commit to do or practice to help you  
overcome those potential obstacles?

What are your hopes for this Bible study? What benefit do you hope to gain  
from memorizing Philippians 4:4-9?

## Daily Prayer

At the end of every day of study, we will provide an interactive prayer to help you pray through what you've learned. There will be opportunities for you to thank God for what He is teaching you, confess where you are falling short, and ask for His help and direction as you seek to live out what you're learning.

*O God,*

*Thank You for Your Word! Thank You that we can know You in it! Thank You for the truth and power and goodness in it for me. Thank You for speaking to me in Your Word. Thank You for how You've specifically used Your Word in my life in the following way:*

*Lord, I confess that sometimes I don't value Your Word like I should. I fill my heart and mind with other things (even good things that are not the best thing)—things that distract me or entertain me. Please forgive me for how I elevate the following things above Your Word:*

*Please help me value Your Word. As I memorize it in this study, please help it bear fruit in my life, so I would want to memorize it more and more.*

*Amen*



# What the Bible Says About the Bible

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds. — Deuteronomy 11:18a

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## HOW IMPORTANT IS THE BIBLE, *REALLY*?

For the longest time I couldn't have professed its importance.

I didn't go to church growing up. So, I was basically biblically illiterate until I got a Bible for my high school graduation. But here's the weird thing—I actually started reading it. I didn't know a thing about God, so I took the opportunity to find out all I could by reading the Bible. And *The Koran*. And *The Book of Mormon*. And *Siddhartha* (a Buddhist novel). And a smattering of other books about other religions. I read and read and read. I also started praying “religiously” every night, “God, if you're there, show me who you are.” After about a year and a half, every book but the Bible had fallen by the wayside. I became convinced it was like no other book, maybe even filled with the actual words of God Himself. In a moment of crisis, I realized I had a choice to make: either burn that book and forget it forever or die to my sin and find life in the God of that book. Needless to say, here I am. I've yet to put that book down.

Why? Because God *has* spoken in His book, and He continues to speak through it.

*The* God of all things—who has no beginning or end, who made and upholds and controls all things, who knows all things, who is love and righteousness and justice and mercy and goodness—this God has spoken to us in the Bible. He is delighted to reveal the deep mysteries of His plan to bring all things in heaven and on earth into glorious, restored relationship with Himself in Christ (Eph. 1:9-11). Wow! Did you hear that? Who wouldn't be drawn to the treasures in that book? How can we not dwell on it? This book is the book of all books!

That's exactly what we find the Bible says about itself.

God is crystal clear on the significance of His Word and the benefits we receive from knowing and believing it. Through God's Word, we come to know Him and His plan of salvation and eternal life in Christ. In it we also find blessing and wisdom and joy, and

every good thing we need for life and godliness. I want these treasures! Don't you? There are so many reasons why we should spend time memorizing and meditating on God's Word. Let's take a look at just a few verses that tell us what God's Word says about God's Word to discover some of those reasons.

But before we do that, let me take a minute to encourage you.

If you're new to all of this or if what you've read so far sounds awesome but also unfamiliar, you've come to the right place; you are welcome here! The Bible is a massive book about a boundless God, and none of us will ever reach the end of it. So, it's ok to not know what you don't know. I spent too many years as a new Christian feeling like a poser, worried that people would find me out. So, if you're feeling a little out of your league, know that we're all truly out of our league. We're just here to humbly learn together.

If you've been a Christian for a while (like maybe most of your life), you've also come to the right place, and you're welcome here too! The massive nature of the Bible and the boundlessness of God boggles me more and more over time. But let's be honest, sometimes we become too familiar with the profound mysteries of God in His book. So, hear me say this to you (and me!): don't take Scripture for granted! Ask God to constantly restore your delight by immersing yourself in His Word. Pray God would use this study to draw you closer to Himself as you memorize His words.

## LOOK IN THE BOOK

I've chosen just a small representation of verses from across the Bible that speak about the value of memorizing and meditating on God's words. Look up the following references and write what you learn from each verse.

<b>JOSHUA 1:7-8</b>	
<b>PSALM 119:11</b>	
<b>JOHN 20:30-31</b>	

<b>HEBREWS 4:12-13</b>	
<b>2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17</b>	
<b>COLOSSIANS 3:16</b>	

Of all the benefits and promises listed in these verses, which one stood out the most to you? Why?

What are some reasons you want to memorize Scripture?

## **Daily Prayer**

*O God,*

*Your Word is as profound and wonderful as You are. Thank You for speaking to us through it and thank You for all the benefits we have from memorizing and meditating on its truth. Thank You especially for this:*

*Lord, I want to live out Your words as the foundation for my life, but so often I don't. Forgive me for not valuing Scripture, especially when it comes to this part of my life:*

*God, please help me to elevate my view of Scripture. Please help me grow in my practice of spending time in it regularly in this way:*

*I praise You for all the good things You have for me in Your Word. Thank You for forgiving me when I fall short. And thank You for helping me by the power of Your Spirit to understand and desire Your Word more and more.*

*Amen*

## DAY THREE

# Dwell on These Things

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. — Philipians 4:8

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### WHAT ARE YOU DWELLING ON?

Before we start memorizing and meditating on the good and true words of God, it's important to take an inventory of what we're tempted to and tend to dwell on instead.

**So, what have you been dwelling on in the past week or so? What did you put in your heart and mind? What did you read, watch, or listen to? What messages did you hear about what's true, what matters, who you are, what you were made for, and what's happening in the world?**

I'm sure you listed a whole range of things from substantiated facts to harmless nothingness to advertising schemes to shameful junk to absolute lies. It's probably a lot to sort through. Our lists show the many messages we hear and see on any given day. And oftentimes, we can be unintentional with so much of our thought lives.

We should be more intentional.

Paul, in his letter to the Philipians, gave us an extensive list of what we should be putting in our minds.

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

See what I mean? That's pretty exhaustive. I can't think of any good thing that falls outside that list. Can you imagine your mind being filled with things like this all the time? We can and should be intentionally directing and redirecting our minds to dwell on such things. Tomorrow we'll see how Scripture is the fulfillment and culmination of every good thing we should dwell on.

Not just some of the time but all the time.

Paul gave us a comprehensive list of things to think on and told us to think on them constantly. The constant part isn't apparent in most English translations, but in the original language (Greek) it's very clear. The Greek word for *think* is a present middle imperative verb, which indicates a command that is to be continuously obeyed.<sup>1</sup> The Amplified Bible translation reflects this meaning: "think continually on these things." In other words, we're never not supposed to have our heads filled with such thoughts. The CSB translation says we are to, "dwell on these things." I love this translation because the word *dwell* carries this nuance of deeply and constantly meditating on something. This is one of the main reasons we titled our study *Dwell on These Things*, because that is what we are going to do. We aren't just going to learn about the value of dwelling on these things; we're going to do so by memorizing and meditating on six Bible verses.

## HOW IT WORKS

Vera and I have been helping people memorize Scripture for many years through our company, Dwell Differently. We use a simple, proven method that works.

### 1. We start with a verse.

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

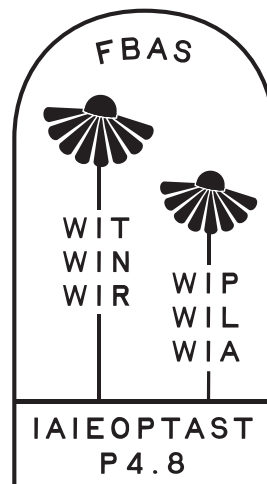
 PHILIPPIANS 4:8

### 2. We take the first letter of each word in the verse and string them together in a long line of letters.

**F B A S W I T W I N W I R W I P W I L W I A I A I E O P T A S T**

3. We take the letters and turn them into a beautiful Scripture design.
4. Every time you see the design image, you're challenged to recall what each letter represents. Eventually, you memorize the verse.

It really is that simple. The image is intentionally designed to help you recall not just the verse itself but also the message of the verse. Since this verse is about dwelling on the true and lovely things of God, we chose the image of a flower. We've included temporary verse tattoos of each design for you to use as reminders. (You'll find them on the perforated card at the back of this book.) Place the temporary verse tattoo somewhere you'll see it often, such as on your wrist. Then, when you see it throughout your day, it will help you recall the verse and its meaning.



For now, imagine how different your life might look if you already had this verse in your head urging you to constantly think about all the good things listed. Let's consider how you might apply Philippians 4:8. Choose a few of the following questions to answer.

**How can keeping in mind what is true help when you're struggling to refute a lie about who you are in Christ or what you're called to do?**

**How can dwelling on what is noble keep you from entertaining dishonorable thoughts about someone?**

**How can constantly considering what is right help you make tough decisions?**

**How can reminding yourself you are pure in Christ help you when you struggle with shame over sin?**

**How can thinking on what God says is lovely help you filter the mixed-bag messages of the world?**

**How can constantly considering what is admirable help you live a life worthy of respect?**

**How can dwelling on morally excellent things help you with holy living?**

**How can filling your mind with praiseworthy things prompt you to praise God, who is the Source of those things?**

**How is Jesus the fulfillment of each of these virtues?**

This is just a taste of where we're headed! We won't actually focus on this verse until Session Seven, but the message in it is foundational for the study itself. I can't wait for us to build on it in the coming weeks.



## **Daily Prayer**

*Dear Lord,*

*Thank You for all the good things we can know about You in Your Word. Thank You that Scripture is filled with all that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Specifically, thank You for this particular good thing I know from Your Word:*

*Lord, as I think about the list in Philippians 4:8, I am at a loss. Too often, I don't fill my mind with those things. Instead, my mind is filled with the following specific things that draw my attention away from You:*

*Forgive me and help me change what I dwell on.*

*Lord, You are a God who is full of truth and grace. Please pour out Your grace on me as You pour out Your truth in Your Word.*

*Amen*

## DAY FOUR

# Finding Meaning in Philippians

### **DON'T SKIM THIS!**

I have a confession.

I'm actually kind of embarrassed to say it, but here goes. I was an English major in college, but I didn't read all my assignments.

I hear my professors whispering, "For shame."

I mean, I had good reasons. It was a lot of reading, and some of it was particularly boring (at least to me). I can't tell you how many times I fell asleep trying to read *Beowulf*. I finally gave up. I did skim it, but if you've ever read Old English, you know that was a huge fail, and my quiz grade reflected it. Even though I read parts of it, I really had no earthly idea what was going on in that epic poem. I still don't. The point: it was silly of me to think I could skim that poem and understand it. That assessment probably holds true for any book of substance.

Yet, most of us do this very thing with the Bible all the time.

Often, we treat the Bible more like a search engine than the story of God. We go to it looking for help with our marriages or how to raise a difficult child. We search through it looking for guidance in a big decision. We dig through it looking for words to comfort our broken hearts. This isn't wrong. The Bible does speak to those issues, and there is so much wisdom in it for us. But if picking out parts is all we're doing, we're missing so much! More than that, we run the risk of misunderstanding the bigger story.

We aren't going to do that here.

Instead, in this study, we're going to read, study, and memorize our verses in the context of the whole book. Not the whole Bible (that'd take way too long!), but the whole book of Philippians. It's four chapters long and should only take about twelve to fifteen minutes to read. Getting this broader context is so important for understanding what our focus verses are saying. Going forward, we'll be referencing parts of the letter again and again. Why? Because everything Paul said in our six memory verses is also mentioned in other parts of the letter, sometimes repeatedly.

Think about it this way: the whole book of Philippians is the lens through which we can and will most clearly see our memory verses. So today, we're going to read through Philippians and answer some questions to establish and understand context.

## **LOOK IN THE BOOK**

**Read through Philippians** and answer these questions.

What are some of the things you can gather about the author? Where was he writing from? What was he concerned or excited about? Who was with him?

What can you tell about the recipients of this letter? What might have been some of their struggles and triumphs?

How did Paul feel about the Philippians? How did he communicate and express those feelings?

What are some of the themes or important ideas that you notice? What are repeated words or phrases?

What stands out to you or makes you pause?

What questions do you have?

Hopefully, you were able to get a good sense of Paul's love for this church and what he wanted to communicate to them. This will set us up well for next week when we start studying our verses one at a time.

## **Daily Prayer**

*Dear Lord,*

*Thank You for the book of Philippians. Thank You for its goodness and beauty. Specifically, thank You for this part:*

*Forgive me when I come to Your book just looking for a quick answer, not really looking to meet You. I think of the recent time this happened:*

*Lord, please give me all the things I need to do this study—the time, the patience, the space, the wisdom, and the commitment. I especially need Your help with:*

*I praise You, God, that You have me in this passage of Scripture in this season of my life. I trust that You will use it for my good and Your glory!*

*Amen*

## DAY FIVE

# God's Word Applied

In each session of this study, Day Five is your reflection day. We'll give you space and time to process all the things you've learned throughout the week. There's a lot of blank space here. Don't be intimidated by it. You don't have to fill it up. Use it to journal notes, quotes, and things to remember. Record your thoughts and prayers as you seek God and find what He wants you to know, understand, and live out.

I've listed some questions to help you get rolling, but don't feel like you need to answer all (or any) of them.

- What are the most significant things you learned this week? What were your "aha moments," if any?
- Write out a favorite verse you've memorized (or want to memorize) and tell why.
- Is there a particular verse God is using in your life in this season? What is it and why?
- Of the list of virtues from Philippians 4:8, which one do you most want to live out? Why?
- What was the most interesting thing you learned from reading through Philippians?

# Reflections

A large grid of small dots, intended for writing reflections. The grid consists of approximately 30 columns and 40 rows of dots, providing a structured space for text.

# Reflections

A large grid of small dots, intended for writing reflections. The grid consists of approximately 30 columns and 40 rows of dots, providing a guide for handwriting.







# Viewer Guide

Watch the Session Two video. Use this page to take notes, capture quotes, or doodle some thoughts from the video teaching session.

# Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with your Bible study group. A more extensive leader guide is available for free download at [LIFEWAY.COM/DWELL](https://www.lifeway.com/dwell).

1. What's one thing that stood out to you in this video teaching? Why?
2. What verse or verses you've memorized have been the most meaningful to you and why?
3. How has God used memorized Scripture to help you minister or witness to others?
4. What are the biggest challenges you've faced in memorizing Scripture?
5. What stood out to you as you read through the whole book of Philippians?
6. How are you challenged by what you've heard in this video teaching?



**TO ACCESS THE VIDEO TEACHING SESSIONS, USE THE**

**INSTRUCTIONS IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE STUDY BOOK.**