

# PHILIPPIANS 4:2-23

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

### ICE BREAKER

- Ray Lewis—former linebacker for the Baltimore Ravens—is infamous for repeatedly quoting Isaiah 54:17 (“no weapon formed against you shall prosper”) to motivate himself and his teammates for their football games. [Watch this video](#) of him explaining what he believes about that verse.
- In its original context, Isaiah 54 was written about 2600 years ago to Israelites facing exile and literal military defeat, and God was providing hope that their misery would not last forever. How do you feel about Ray Lewis using that verse to apply to a game of football?
- Have you ever discovered later that a favorite Bible verse of yours doesn’t really mean what you first thought it did?

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**Today we finally arrive to one of the most beloved (and tattooed!) verses in the entire Bible. I know Philippians 4:13 is a favorite to many of you—and it should be! But it’s also one of the verses that is most misunderstood and taken out of context. My hope is that when we dig deeper into this climactic passage of Paul’s letter to the Philippian church that we will not only correct some of these misunderstandings but also love it that much more *because of what it truly means.***

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### CONTEXT

- Paul identifies two conflicts that have put the Philippians and himself in some hardship, one in verses 2-9 and the other in verses 10-20. What are they?
- It is often said that a person’s character is best revealed in the face of conflict and adversity.
  - Can you think of a time you responded to conflict well? What did that reveal about you?
  - Can you think of a time your responded to conflict poorly? What did that reveal about you?

## VERSES 2-9

- There is an unnamed conflict between two women, Euodia and Syntyche. Paul hopes they can resolve their differences by seeing that they are actually on the same team. What do Euodia and Syntyche have in common?
- At first glance it looks like Paul changes the subject in verses 4-9, but look closer! How are these teachings connected to the conflict Paul talks about in verses 2-3?
- According to Paul, how do we find “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” in times of conflict and hardship?
- Imagine you are Euodia. What would it look like for you to put verses 4-9 into practice in your conflict with the Synthyche?
- Today it is easy for just about anyone to voice their strong opinions on any subject, and that means there will be a lot of division conflict. Unfortunately, we see this among Christians too. What would it look like for Christians to disagree while not giving up on the things that unite us?

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### WORD STUDY: ἐπιεικής

Paul uses the Greek word *epieikēs* in verse 5. You probably see it translated as “reasonableness” or “gentleness” in your English translations. Reasonableness is crucial for maintaining community. It is the sort of attitude that seeks what is best for everyone and not just for oneself. Can you think of an example when you saw someone help resolve a conflict by practicing ἐπιεικής?

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## VERSES 10-23

- “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (verse 13). It’s a favorite verse for many. Why do you think it’s so popular?
- Everything comes down to what “do all things” means. Some people read this verse to themselves before a challenging event, like a big test or a recital or a sports game. But Paul has something different on his mind. Maybe this outline of verses 11-13 will help us break it down...

I have learned...

A. In whatever situation, in every circumstance

a. To be brought low, to face hunger, to face need

b. To abound, to face plenty, to face abundance

B. To be content

... I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- So, what does “do all things” mean in “I can ***do all things*** through Christ who strengthens me”?
- Now we know that Paul didn’t have your competitive quidditch match in mind when he wrote Philippians 4:13. But actually the hope provided in this verse is much more powerful. How can this verse give you hope in times of hardship, maybe like the hardship we’re living through right now?
- Read and reflect on this quote: “Jesus Christ plunged himself into our furnace, so when we find ourselves in the fire we can turn to him and know we will not be consumed.” (Tim Keller)
- How does Christ suffering, death, and resurrection give you hope when you face your own trials and hardships?

## RESPOND

Close in conversation with God about the things that encouraged you and challenged you from this week’s study, asking for his strength to carry you through any hardships you may be facing right now. You may use Psalm 102 to guide your prayer:

Hear my prayer, O LORD;  
let my cry come to you!  
Do not hide your face from me  
in the day of my distress!  
Incline your ear to me;  
answer me speedily in the day when I call!

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.  
They will perish, but you will remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment.  
You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,  
but you are the same, and your years have no end.  
The children of your servants shall dwell secure;  
their offspring shall be established before you.