

Focus On The Cross (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, there you go. Testing one, two, three. All right. I got a green light. So, yeah.

! All right. So, before we start the recording, so you all know, so we record these. I'm not crazy about recording myself, but as we have, I tend to try to have a little bit more interaction. I know. It might as well have been six years, six months. It's been like four weeks, right? So, today's the 18th, right? So, it's been almost a full month since then. So, that's okay. So, we'll re-look at some of the points. I actually pulled the slides that Jeff shared that night.

We'll go quickly through them. So, we'll spend about 15 minutes doing that, and then we'll make our way through most of chapter one in the book. We're not going to get through the end of it, and I owe you all 15 minutes because we went over 15 minutes or so last Wednesday. So, we're not going to stop. I'll try to end on time. That'll be my goal. With this study, it's really, we'll just stop where we stop. When time's up, we'll pick it up next week as well.

So, great study, great study. So, when Jeff and I were planning to do this, so he was going to sort of take the lead and teach most of this book. But, right, you know, we make good plans within the Lord, right? It's in His hands. And so, this has sort of forced me to spend a lot more time in depth with Philippians, and I've just totally loved it. Matt preached out of Philippians 4 this past Sunday.

So, we sort of got a theme going of Philippians. So, I hope you all work. So, we're going to try to get the momentum going again on a Wednesday night to sort of stay consistent with this. So, dive back into Philippians for our Wednesday night study. Again, we'll be tonight, we'll be in chapter 1 and probably, yeah, definitely next week as well. So, hey, it's only, how many chapters in Philippians? Yeah, only four chapters in Philippians. So, it's pretty short. But just, as is all of Scripture, lots of gold nuggets in there as we see how Paul communicates to the Philippian Church and to us by extension. So, let me pray. Oh, actually, before I pray, before we start the recording, let's pause and pray first. So, Father, we do want to just thank

[2 : 26] You, Lord, first of all. We want to thank You for Jesus. We want to thank You for Jesus and His shed blood on the cross, Lord, that gives us hope and that gives us just joy in life that's full of trials and tribulations, Father. And so, we don't want to take that for granted. We don't want to be presumptuous with that. We want to, first of all, just worship You and adore You and thank You for the reconciliation, for the relationship that we can have through You. So, that's what brings us together.

That's what knits us together, this church family, is that common understanding of the gospel, the beautiful gospel. So, we praise You for that. We are mindful as we come together tonight and as we study Philippians. We are mindful, though, Lord, that there are so many needs in our church, emotional, physical, spiritual, financial. Father, You know. And so, we can rest in knowing that You know.

And, Father, we also know that You are a good God and You do good and that You are faithful and that You are sovereign and You are perfect. That You are loving. That You are a great provider and You are holy and You are just too, Lord.

You are full of love and full of grace and full of mercy. So, we rest on You and we rest on Your name. We go to You with confidence that You hear us, that You know our hearts, Father, and You know the love that we have for our brothers and sisters in Christ. And so, would You meet them where they are, Lord?

Lord, encourage them through Your Word. Help them where they are and use us, Father. Use this church as Your hand in ministering to those, Father. Whether it be a phone call, a text, a meal, just a brief hello, Father. Anything that we can do to convey Your love to them, Father, use us. Just use us in a mighty way. And we'll trust in You in that. And so, Father, we will trust You as well tonight, Father. We're eager to get into Your Word. We're eager to see what You will teach us, Father. So,

thank You for Your Word.

[4 : 30] Your Word is truth. So, we ask that You would sanctify us in Your truth and in Your Word as we open it up tonight, Father, for Your glory, for Your honor. We worship You and we praise You. In Christ's name, amen.

All right. So, Philippians. So, for those of you who walked in a couple of minutes late, we were joking a little bit. So, it was January, Wednesday, January 21st, when we kicked off our study in Basics for Believers by D.A. Carson. So, Bowden's, y'all didn't miss a thing.

You've been almost around the world and back, and we've had ice storms, there's no storms, and all the tropical winds and hurricanes are on your end, and you didn't miss any of our studies. So, that's good. So, what I'm going to do is take about five or ten minutes to refresh our memory of how we kicked off back last month in this study.

The, you know, Philippians, again, I mentioned this a minute ago, Philippians is four short chapters. And so, I would encourage you, if you're not following our church's Bible reading plan as we go through 1 Timothy, if you don't have a Bible plan, reading plan of your own, hey, pick up Philippians and start just reading through Philippians over and over.

It's not an either or. It can be both and, right? You can be doing your Bible reading plan and preparing for Wednesday night. So, what D.A. Carson does, if you have your book, hey, go to the table of contents, which is on page seven.

[5 : 57] And again, I'm just, you know, very, very high level view. I like to sort of see where I'm going when we start a study. So, if you look at the table of contents, right, you'll see that D.A. Carson breaks Philippians, the four chapters in Philippians, up into five chapters.

And so, we'll kick off, we'll be in D.A. Carson's chapter one. And we did it in January. We'll be in it tonight. And we'll be in chapter one, one more Wednesday night.

But what he titles chapter one is, Put the Gospel First. So, if you remember, when we kicked off last month, we read Philippians chapter one. And there was a word that Paul uses six times.

I counted up six times in Philippians chapter one. And that word is gospel. Right. And so, if you remember, we discussed a little bit about, before we even jumped into the book, what our understanding is, what the biblical understanding is of the term gospel.

And do you all happen to remember, those of you who were here that night, any of that discussion? The gospel, when we think of what's the gospel in sort of a clear, succinct way.

[7 : 09] Because we're going to talk, you know, D.A. Carson is going to talk about the gospel. His four points in his chapter one, as he breaks down Philippians one, is all about the gospel. And so, we've got to make sure we can't go any further until we make sure we have a solid understanding of the gospel.

So, Michelle, you raise your hand. Okay. So, gospel. Definition, understanding, your own words. What's the gospel?

It's the story of salvation that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth, taught people about himself in salvation, and he died as a perfect sacrifice in our place for our people.

Yep. And he did that because why? What could we not attain on our own? Because we can't ever be good enough for our own salvation. Yeah. Yeah. And when you say salvation, we're saying that relationship with God, right, that was cut, right, in the Garden of Eden.

Yep. So, Jeff explained, when we kicked it off, right, there's sort of two facets when we think about gospel, right? In the very specific sense, it's about this, right? God's good news. That's what gospel means, right?

[8 : 26] His good news about His salvation from sins through Jesus Christ. But he also shared that in more of a general sense, if you all remember, he sort of picked up his Bible, you know, Scripture is the gospel, right?

The Bible is the gospel. It's the good news from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation. And when we look at God's character, when we look at His nature, His name, His will, His life, and as we see Him through what we characterize as the walking word, right, Jesus Himself, and then the written word, Holy Scripture, right, that is a sort of a broad, general understanding of the gospel. And then we ask ourselves, okay, so church, as we look at Philippians chapter 1, how do you think when Paul is writing his letter, his epistle to the Philippians, and he refers to the gospel, is Paul referring sort of more to the general understanding of gospel, or is he referring more in the context of his writing to the more specific context of the gospel?

And the answer is, y'all remember? It's on the left-hand side, right? As we look at how Paul uses the term gospel, it's referring to more of what we generally understand as the gospel, the good news, the saving grace through Jesus Christ, right?

And so, as believers in Jesus Christ, as churchgoers, one of the things that we ought to be ready to give is not only account, right, for the faith that we have and the hope that we have, but we should be able to give an elevator pitch, you know, a 15-second pitch of explanation of what the gospel is, or a five-minute explanation if you happen to be sitting down having coffee with someone, right?

[10:17] So these are good sort of just general principles, good sort of disciplines that we should have as believers, that we should be able to clearly articulate the gospel.

For those of you who have gone through, the Carters aren't here tonight, some of you are coming up, but when Jeff and I meet with prospective church members as they're going through the membership process, we go through this a lot, right?

We want to make sure that candidates for church membership, that one of the basics is that you're able to explain biblically what the gospel is. And so that's an important aspect of being a believer, right, is understanding the gospel.

But in this context, it's understanding how Paul is using the term gospel. Again, because he uses it six times, at least in the ESV, in the first chapter of Philippians.

All right, so again, I'm going to speed up a little bit. But as Jeff was kicking us off last month in this, we also looked at, I think it was page 13 in this book here, and we sort of were looking a little bit how D.A. Carson was sort of framing his introduction before he dives into some of the text in chapter 1.

[11:31] So do you remember when we were reading off of page 13, D.A. Carson starts, So I would like to buy about \$3 worth of gospel, please. You remember? I remember that.

It's like, not too much gospel, right? Just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I can get addicted. And he continues that long paragraph on page 13 with sort of how the world, and maybe even unfortunately a lot of Christians want just enough gospel, right, to be comfortable, but not enough gospel to cause transformation and change.

And then we talked a little bit about how in culture today the gospel is being domesticated. And we talked about what does D.A. Carson mean by domesticated?

And I think some of you talked about maybe like trained is maybe the intent of that word, but we landed on a little bit better word, which was tamed, right? And so I'm sure you would agree that as we look at culture and as they are so anti-Christian nowadays, we can see how the gospel, just there's forces in culture in Western society that just want to tame the gospel, want to take the teeth out of the power of the gospel.

And what is causing that? And so D.A. Carson in chapter 1 in pages 13, 14, and 15, he talked about maybe three influences that we see in culture today.

[13:02] Now, again, this is not a philosophy class, but why is he doing this? He's wanting to give us purpose behind what we're about to learn in chapter 1, okay? So this is not sort of academia.

This is not sort of just him being super smart, although he's brilliant. He's brilliant. Such an intellect. He's not just showing off what he knows, right? But he's helping us. He's giving us a frame of reference so that when we dive into what Paul's writing, we see direct application against how we can fight against the world.

And as we fight against just the current of us also allowing our understanding of the gospel and our application of the gospel in our lives to domesticate us, if you would, and to tame us, right, to the point where we're just sort of comfortable and we're just sort of, you know, we're a casual.

We're a casual Christian, right? So he's giving us some warnings of how we see culture. It could be impacting you, me, this church, and we don't even know it. So this is about equipping and generating awareness that we may not have.

And so he talks about three of them. And again, they're on pages 13 and 14. And I don't want to spend a lot of time because we went over this. The Wednesday night teaching back on January 21st is recorded.

[14:17] So it's on our website. So you can go back and listen to that and the slides as well just to get caught up if you need to. But you'll see that he talks about secularization. And the key point there, if you remember, was when Carson talks about secularization, it's not that he wants to get rid of religion, right?

Culture doesn't want us to get rid of religion altogether. But what is culture sort of pushing us to do as church folks, as those who follow religion?

To the periphery, right. Yeah. Not eliminating. Yep. Yep. Bingo.

Bingo. Not turn it off, right? Because I think that would maybe, you know, awaken our senses. You know, it's not that culture is necessarily trying to get rid of a limb, to eliminate religion, but instead pushing it to the periphery where just enough for us to be comfortable.

You know, it's there. We do our church thing. Again, tames us. You see where that word makes a lot of sense now. It sort of takes the teeth out of it. And so you see that. You see that in culture today, the secularization.

[15 : 28] Second one, just self-indulgence, right? It's the prioritizing our own comfort, our own preferences, our security, right?

Prioritizing that over living a life that reflects Jesus Christ, right? Self-sacrificing, giving, considering others more important than yourself.

And that means giving, giving until it hurts, perhaps. Self-sacrificing and doing those sorts of things. So, again, you see culture, the priority is the self-indulgence.

I'm going to take care of myself first, and then whatever's left, then I can help others and feel good about it. Third thing Carson mentions in this first chapter is philosophical pluralism.

I almost even put that on the slide because that immediately, that turns me off, right? Too technical, too high-headed. But all that means is when you think of pluralism, plural means many, right?

[16 : 25] So it's like, you know, in today's society, I was going to add a picture. Have you seen those bumper stickers that say coexist? And it's all the different symbols of all the different religions.

So it's just sort of like a smorgasbord of that bumper sticker. You know, we're all going to coexist. It's all, everything's right. No one's wrong. You know, it's the same God for everyone. And that pluralism where everything's just sort of blended together.

And that means the implication of that is there's no absolute truth. So for anyone to then claim absolute truth, well, y'all, this is absolute truth right here.

Right? That then, that's what causes some conflict. And he writes on page 14, Carson does, the sole heresy has become the view that there is such a thing as heresy.

Who are you, Grace Church, to call others heretics that don't believe in what I believe? And so, again, as we look at those three sort of all together, what is the world doing, the pressure it's putting on us, right?

[17 : 28] It's the squeezing religion to the periphery. All right? So it's the reducing of priority and importance in one's life. It's the making us comfortable, right?

So, you know, we don't want to, once we get so comfortable and content with where we are, you know, I don't want to give or sacrifice. I'm too comfortable. And then thirdly is, hey, we're all one big happy family.

We should all believe the same thing. Don't offend me with your views of things. There is no absolute truth, right? What's true for me? That's not necessarily true for you. And that's okay. We'll all just get along.

Creating your own gospel. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's exactly the introduction. Yeah. That's pluralism. Just a blend. And we see that, right? So Bible scholars, you know, if you read, you know, some of the commentaries and some of the historical, we see that as Rome and Greece, as they would take over, you know, people groups, they would just sort of absorb their religion and their beliefs, and it just became sort of a pluralistic society.

And that's what's happening today. And that's the point that Carson makes on the top of page, I think it was page 16. Yeah. Is that the context that Paul is writing in A.D. 60 or plus or minus when he's writing this letter has a lot of similarities with our culture today.

[18 : 48] The church in Philippi was about 10 years old. Hey, guess how old Greece Church Williamsburg is? About 10 years old. And Philippians, again, is writing in a time with these pressures.

Our culture, we're seeing and feeling a lot of these pressures as well. So this letter is very applicable, directly applicable to us as believers in Christ. So y'all remember that from a month ago?

Is it starting to bring back some fire, some memory neurons there? What else did we have from last time, just as a reminder? So on page 16, then Carson, again, this is right before we get into the

actual writing of Paul in verses 3 through 8.

So Carson encourages us, right, in two main spiritual objectives for our holy living. So again, this is the setup before we get into Philippians 1. And he says that we are called, he's encouraging us, he's exhorting us, to maintain basic Christian principles.

Well, what does Carson mean by that? We talked about that a little bit last time. When Carson says, let me read, let me read that off a page.

[20 : 07] It's the top of page 16. So the church at Philippi is not more than 10 years old. Paul perceives a variety of pressures lurking in the wings, pressures that could damage this fledgling Christian community.

He cannot visit them, right? Where is Paul right now as he's writing this letter? He's in prison, right? He's in jail. He's in prison. So he can't visit them, but he wants to encourage them to do two things. Number one, maintain basic Christian commitments. And then number two, we'll see that as we study through Philippians. He's going to encourage his readers, the church at Philippi, to maintain their basic Christian commitments, the things they've learned in those 10 years, to be faithful in doing that.

And then number two, to be on guard against an array of dangers. All right. Array of dangers. So there's a couple of arrays of dangers, right? And Carson goes on and says, temptations from within. So from within our church, our community, right? Our brothers and sisters, temptations from within, and then seduction and opposition from without, outside of our church, right?

[21 : 14] So there's ways that the world is trying to seduce us, right? To do things that would be gratifying sinfully, if you would. And then also temptations, seductions, and opposition, right?

So the world seduces, but the world also opposes, right? You see that reading social media, watching the news, right? You can't escape it, right?

They're either trying to seduce you, trying to persuade you, or they're opposing you when they know that they can't get you. So Carson says, hey, as you pursue the gospel, as you live the gospel, be on guard against these dangers, and then continue your basic Christian commitments.

Again, gathering as a church, praying, studying, encouraging one another, doing the one another's, etc. All right.

So that, in a nutshell, was sort of the summary of our kickoff last time. We did get into the first few verses, but that probably about 80% of it.

[22 : 18] What is Paul's burden as he writes to these Christians? And what is God telling us by His Spirit through these same words?

The first chapter of this book emphasizes to put the gospel first. So if you have your book, that's what chapter 1 is called, to put the gospel first. Hey, is that monitor off?

Is it broken? No? Okay. I usually watch that one, but that one's not working. All right. So put the gospel first. All right. Who has their books? I want to make sure.

Most, most... Oh, y'all are up. Fantastic. All right. All right. So most of us have our books. All right. So if you happen to finger through chapter 1 in the book, now I'm going to step back and give you another bird's eye overview of chapter 1.

All right. So there's four section headings in chapter 1. I'll put them all up here. This is where we're going. All right. So last month we spent the latter half of our time looking at his first point.

[23 : 21] All right. So put the fellowship of the gospel at the center of your relationships with believers. Put the fellowship of the gospel at the center of your relationships with believers.

And we'll, again, I'll take a minute to review that one. Tonight we're going to look at number 2 and number 3. Put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life. Put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life.

And we'll look at that as we cover verses 9, 10, and 11. Thirdly, put the advance of the gospel. You understand what that means, right? The advance, the progress, the movement, the advance of the gospel at the center of your aspirations.

And we'll look at that in verses 12 through 18. We'll see Paul's theme of prioritizing. In your aspirations, are you centered on, are you prioritizing the advancement of the gospel in your own aspirations?

And then number 4, we'll hit this next time, is put the converts of the gospel at the center of your principled self-denial. So you see where D.A. Carson sort of, you know, he's using that same sort of put the blank of the gospel at the center of your blank, right?

[24 : 34] So he's using that sort of, that tempo or that cadence to help us remember these sections in chapter 1. All right.

So let's look at that first one very quickly. So put the gospel first. So in verses 3 through 8, and if I'll have someone read that, chapter 1, verses 3 through 8.

Again, his point is put the fellowship of the gospel. We'll talk about what that means. Put the fellowship of the gospel at the center of your relationships with believers. Now, real quick, before I have someone read, if you're sitting here right now and you're thinking, oh my goodness, how D.A. Carson has organized this, it's just not clicking right now.

Just hang tight, right? This is really, as we go through these verses, as we start reading from Scripture, I think it's going to click for you. I found myself struggling a little bit with how he's framed this, but just hang tight.

Because it's like, oh yeah, I understand what that means. All right. So don't lose interest. Don't lose hope yet. All right. There's no need to do that. This is really very straightforward, as Paul wrote.

[25 : 47] Very straightforward sort of truths and encouragements that we get when we read this chapter. All right. So can someone read verses 3 through 8 from Philippians 1 and read it loud so I can get you on the recording.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you, all making my prayer rejoice. Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart. For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

For God is my witness. How I yearn for you all with the affections of Christ Jesus. All right. Thank you, brother.

[27 : 05] All right. So that was Philippians 1 verses 3 through 8. So if you look at your book down on the bottom of page 16, this is where he kicks off this section.

And he gives us, it says, Here are the grounds of Paul's thanksgiving to God. And there's three in number. And again, this teaching, we're going to follow the book pretty closely and then sort of expound a little bit of what Carson says.

But the three points, the three grounds of Paul's thanksgiving to God that we see in verses 3 through 8. So the first one is, if you read chapter, I mean, verse 3, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.

And so the first one is, you know, Paul's thankfulness to God for what he knows is operating in the lives of these believers. So the first one is, now, if you read the bottom of 16 up to 17, now the way D.A. Carson interprets this is, although in our translation it says, I thank my God, Paul thanks his God in all of his remembrance of the Philippians.

He says at the top of 17, I think Paul is referring to their remembrance of him. And later on he will thank the Philippians for remembering him so warmly that they sent funds to support him in his ministry.

[28 : 25] And so he's looking at the original writing in Greek, and D.A. Carson sort of interprets it that it's them remembering Paul. And so that's sort of the tact he takes, which is fine, that works.

And so the first point is that Paul is thankful that in the work of him and what he's doing in the gospel, that he's just so thankful of them, the church in Philippi, remembering him.

Right? Faithful memory of him. They are committed to Paul's success in the gospel work. I think the word was used, what translation did you read from?

ESV? Okay, so it was a partnership. Does someone else have a different word in verse 4? Other than partnership?

I'm sorry, yeah, verse 5. Because of your participation in the gospel? So participation, partnership, there's one more. Fellowship, yeah, yeah.

[29 : 28] So the term fellowship, participation, partnership all communicates that spirit of that they're working together with a common purpose, with a common theme, with a common interest.

And that's what Paul is so grateful for, right? Their faithful memory of him. They are committed to Paul's success in sharing the gospel. So again, when we look at the broader section header here, put the fellowship of the gospel.

We could use the term participation, or we can use the term partnership. And that may make it a little clearer in what the point is that he's trying to make.

Put the fellowship of the gospel. Put the participation, the mutual participation of the gospel. Put the partnership of the gospel at the center of your relationships with fellow believers.

All right, hopefully that's starting to bring some enlightenment to sort of the point that he's making. So, what does, and I think we just answered the question. I think Jeff did the exact same thing last time.

[30 : 34] We answered the question, then we put the question up here. What does Paul mean by their partnership with him? So, in your own words, how would you just sort of explain what I just said?

Partnership, participation, fellowship. They're mutual, caring, concern. Yeah, yep.

Especially in the fact that he was sitting in jail. Right. Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, there's that mutualness, that partnership.

That togetherness. So, the heart of true fellowship. So, as we talk about the fellowship of the gospel, right, as we live out the gospel here at our church, right, the heart of true fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision.

A vision that calls forth our commitment. All right. Do you see that when you go in partnership with someone? Think of a business example, right? If you go in business with a partner, you all better have a shared vision, a shared goal, something that you've mutually agreed upon and you're working together with.

[31 : 45] And so, this is the same sort of concept, but in the context of the church and of living out the gospel. What brings us, listen, as I look around this room, listen, we're pretty diverse, right?

When I look at us, ages, genders, skin color, height, weight, occupation, interest, right? Even in a small group we have tonight, pretty diverse group, but what's at least one thing that brings us all together here tonight?

It's the gospel, right? The love of Jesus Christ, the gospel. And so, we are in partnership together as a church. And this is what Paul and D.A. Carson, what they're getting out here, that we put this partnership of the gospel together.

That's the center, or should be the center of our relationships. All right. So, there were two points.

The third point is, again, why is Paul thankful to God as reflected in these verses?

So, their faithful memory of Him, and then we understand what partnership means. Partnership, fellowship, participation. I like participation. That's a good one. What translation is participation?

[32 : 54] NASB? Okay, good. And then thirdly, God's continuing work in their lives, right? And so, again, let me read the first few verses here again.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, or as D.A. Carson interprets it, their remembrance of Him. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Now, verse 6. And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. And so, we see in Paul writing to the Philippians that God's continuing work in their lives is a source, another source of His thankfulness for them and for that participation.

So, what's the evidence? So, question, all right, so Carson, where are you getting this from? What's the evidence for this work that Paul's focusing on? Paul said that.

Why is he so convinced? I am sure of this. Paul's in prison right now. Anybody want to take a stab at that?

[34 : 17] Well, my notes say that their persevering in holiness and truth and walking in Jesus Christ. Yeah. When we talked about this last month, I think we used the term spurious, which is sort of the opposite of persevering, right?

And so, Paul sees, now, he sees that God is persevering them. And so, Paul's confidence is not in their actions, but Paul's confidence, his joy, is in the fact that God is persevering them, as He does us as well.

So, the evidence is, and that's your notes, that's what came from the slide, right? That the perseverance that he sees in them, in their holiness and in truth. And so, let's do application for just a minute.

This is actually where we ended last time, right? So, application time. So, can we just sort of have some discussion here? So, what's it mean? And again, we've flown through the first few verses. And again, this is review. But what does it mean? What does putting the fellowship of the gospel at the center of our relationships with fellow believers here at Grace Church Williamsburg, what does that look like?

[35 : 29] What's the application of these first few verses? Mark. For the recording, Mark is now speaking. I would look at it in a, and so instead of, as we're sitting here, and, you know, I guess a couple weeks back, maybe there was some football game that was happening.

And so, instead of sitting around and going, well, you know, so-and-so did so well, and whatever, talking about the worldly things and the things of not of Christ, we should be pouring into each other and glorifying and praising God, and really discussing the gospel and how that is working in our lives and how we see it working in others and praising the others of how it's working in their lives. And so that's what I would think. That's fantastic. So, again, for the recording, you know, Mark, you sort of, you gave the example of there was some big national football game that was played on Super Bowl Sunday, right, a week or two ago, right?

And should the emphasis, should the priority of our conversations at that time be about the football game in exclusion of more eternal, godly, encouraging things, right?

That is an example. Not that talking about the Super Bowl is bad, but it's where you put it in relation to gospel things. That's a great, that's a very, that's a great tangible example. The content of our conversation.

[37 : 01] Yeah. Yeah. Some other just examples of what that might look like. Yeah, Kevin. There you go.

You drop what you're doing to go help, to be the hands of Jesus, if you would, for those who are in crisis who need help. Yep. Yeah, that sort of goes back to that self-indulgence, right?

I'm too comfortable. I'm too content. Yeah, it's too icy outside. It's too cold, too snowy. I don't, I really don't, I'm not crazy about helping, helping others in need. Nah, I mean, the fellowship of the gospel means you put your feet and hands moving, right?

To help those in need, right? That's, that's fellowship of the gospel. That's that. Why do we do it? Because we love one another, right? For the love of Christ. And just to kind of expand on that, is just to have relationships with each other outside of church.

Yeah, have relationships with others outside of church. Yeah. Yeah. With each other. Hmm? To have relationships with each other. Right. Outside of church. Yep. In other words, you know, there's certain people within the church that you have similar interests with, and you make a, you be intentional about having a relationship with them, not just on Sunday, but other times, you know?

[38 : 23] Oh, you mean we can't act one way on Sunday and then, and then act all the other ways? No, no, I was, I was being joking. Go out together. Yeah. Or, you know, go out to eat together. Or just call, you know, some of them and say, how are you doing this week?

Or share a recipe or whatever it might be, you know? Live life together. Yeah. Yeah. So pursue Christ together. Right. Yeah.

Develop, develop relationships. Yep. Good, good. That's what it looks like. That's the applying this sort of concept of, so put the fellowship of the gospel at the center of your relationship.

Right. The ultimate with believers. Turn to page 21. Those are fantastic answers.

Right. You're spot on. I want to read a little bit of page 21 to you. This is sort of how D.A. Carson talks about this in his words. So the top of 21, I'll just read that page quickly.

[39 : 25] So both from Paul's example and from that of the Philippians, we must learn this first point. The fellowship of the gospel or the fellowship or the partnership of the gospel, as we've said, must be at the center of our relationships with other believers.

And that's so key, right? Going back to Mark, what you were saying, it's got to be the center. The center. Not to the exclusion of everything else, but it's a matter of priority and importance. And I just, I'm convicted when I read that.

And I wonder, you know, as I was preparing, as like all the conversations I've had with you all, and when I've seen you outside of a Sunday morning context, you know, I'm sort of trying to recount, have I been intentionally making this the center, the fellowship of the gospel, the center of our talking and of our interacting together?

This is the burden of these opening verses in Philippians 1. Paul does not commend them for the fine times they had sharing, watching games in the arena. He doesn't mention their literature discussion groups or the excellent meals they had, although undoubtedly they had enjoyed some fine times together.

What lies at the center of all his ties with them, doubtless, includes meals and discussion, but is the, doubtless, including the meals and discussion, is the passion for the gospel, this partnership in the gospel.

[40 : 48] Yeah, where is your passion? Is your passion for the gospel, that's just going to eek out of you. It's just going to seep out of you and folks are going to see it, or they might see a lack of it.

Right? What ties us together? What do we talk about when we meet, even after a church service? Mere civilities? The weather? I talk about the weather a lot, right? Sports?

Our careers and our children? How many of us talk about our children? How many of us talk about our grandchildren? Right? I'm meddling now. Our careers, our children, our aches and pains?

Oh, aches and pains. Oh, yes, yes. You all, we'll talk afterward about aches and pains. It's a whole new world for me. All right, none of these topics, none of these topics should be excluded.

Okay, so there's balance here. None of these topics should be excluded from the conversation of Christians, of course. In sharing all of life, these things will inevitably come up. But what must tie us together as Christians is the passion for the gospel, this fellowship in the gospel.

[41 : 52] On the face of it, nothing else is strong enough to hold the extraordinary diversity of people who constitute many churches. Men and women, young and old, blue collar and white, healthy and ill, fit, flabby, different races, different incomes, different levels of education, different personalities.

But what holds us together? It is the gospel, the good news that in Jesus, God Himself has reconciled us to Himself. This brings about a precious God-centeredness.

That's it. A precious God-centeredness. After you spend some time with a fellow believer and you're sort of looking back and you're recounting your time together, I think that's sort of a litmus test a little bit.

You can ask yourself, Was that a precious God-centered time together that we share with other believers? Top of 22. This means that in our conversations we ought regularly to be sharing in the gospel.

That is delighting in God, sharing with one another what we have been learning from His word, joining in prayer for the advance of the gospel, not least in the lives of those to whom we have been bearing witness, encouraging one another in obedience and maturing, discipleship, bearing one another's burdens, and growing in self-sacrificial love for one another for Christ's sake.

[43 : 11] In short, we must put the gospel first. That's what it means, right? We just briefly say, let's live a gospel-centered life. Well, what's that mean? Does that mean you're reading your Bible all day?

Well, that's certainly part of it. But I just love this first point, and we see it reflected in Paul's heart in these first few verses in Philippians 1, right? The fellowship of the gospel, right, should be at the center of our relationships.

So maybe that's something to sort of consider and think about and pray about as you go home tonight and into this week. We're going to hit a couple of other points here, but are you putting the fellowship of the gospel, right, at the center of those relationships, those conversations, and those interactions?

I'm convicted. I'm convicted about that. And maybe you are as well. I'm going to tell you, like, when at verse 3, you know, right off, you talk about it in all of my prayers for you.

You know, that's the first thing you talked about. And I think putting the gospel at the center of our relationship, like if you tell someone you're committed to pray for them when they share their burden with you, what that does for you.

[44 : 24] Yes. It is very powerful.

So again, for the recording, Carolyn, you were just talking about how powerful it is when you are remembering others and you're praying for them and you even communicate that to them. Perhaps you even pray with them, right?

I'll pray for you. Hey, you got a minute? Let's just pray together. To me, that's a mighty work. Not just for the moment, but for that relationship.

And I even think for the next trial that comes. And it sort of builds that strength in a relationship because the shoe could be on the other foot. And that's some of the one another's. And we do that. That's living the gospel. Yeah, that's great. That's a great point. When you pray for somebody, you build a bond with them. Mm-hmm. Yep. You build a bond with them. You ever pray for somebody you didn't know or somebody who's out and then you met them?

[45 : 27] You felt like you knew them? Yeah. Yeah. Oh, that's a great point. Yeah. That's neat. Yep. That's one of many, many ways we can, again, put the fellowship of the gospel.

That's the fellowship of the gospel. The partnership, right? We're a partnership together. We're in participation. We're living life together. Yeah. That's good. That's good, good, good.

All right. Well, speaking of prayer, actually, that was a great dovetail into our next point, right? So then we move on to verses 9 through 11. And this is sort of a new material for tonight.

We may not make it through the third point as I'm watching the clock. That's okay. So in verses 9 through 11, and we're on page 22 now in the book, the section header here is put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life.

So let me just let me cut to the chase because we talked about this a little bit last Wednesday night when we met. And I think you're starting to feel the cadence here as we talked about the previous point, right? The fellowship of the gospel at the center, at the prominence, right?

[46 : 32] At the most important part of the relationships. What do you think this section is going to be about? Put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life. So now, instead of our relationships with one another being examined a little bit, now our prayer life is going to be examined, right?

And we see that in verses 9 through 11. Can someone read verses 9, 10, and 11 for us? And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Thank you, Jennifer. Man, these three verses are so good. So Paul writes, and it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more. When's the last time you all prayed that?

When's the last time I prayed that? That your love will abound more and more. And Carson makes a point here. Notice what Paul does not say. He doesn't say, verse 9, and it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more regarding your service to me.

My prayer is that your love may abound more and more so you can give to our church. That you can help me in ministry. Right? Carson makes a point here that Paul leaves it open-ended.

[48 : 07] When we pray for each other, our prayer should be that your love may abound more and more. That's it. Unbound. Just pray that love may abound more and more.

I love his point. And he says that right there at the bottom of 22. Right? Paul prays that the love of the Philippians may abound more and more. Paul provides no specific object.

That's about four lines from the bottom of page 22. He does not say that your love for God may abound more and more, that your love for one another may abound more and more. I suspect he leaves the object open precisely because he would not want to restrict his prayer to one or the other.

I just, you know, those subtle, those small little subtle things, those are fantastic. And so we see Paul, he's a great example for us. He's praying for the Philippians that their love may abound more and more.

But then he moves on, right? That their love will become more knowledgeable, right? Not necessarily, there's not an object of the love, but that the extent of the love may grow in knowledge and discernment.

[49 : 16] So what kind of, let's see, do I have a, yeah. So what kind of knowledge does Paul mean here? So Paul's praying that their love may abound more and more with all knowledge and discernment.

Knowledge of what? Mine says real knowledge. Okay, real knowledge. Real knowledge of what? God. Yeah, of God. Yeah, absolutely. Yep. That's what Paul's talking about.

Real knowledge, if you would, with knowledge and discernment of God. Mine says in all judgment. In all judgment, yeah. Discernment, decision-making, wisdom.

Yep, yep, yep. In all knowledge. Is there two words there, Michael, for yours? Is it saying with all knowledge and judgment? Yeah, discernment. Yep. Another good word there.

Right, so what will work? Now, another question for you as we sort of unpack this. Right, so we're talking about knowledge of God. Now, what will work?

[50 : 20] And if you've read ahead, listen, all these questions, I mean, the answers are in the book. Matter of fact, we take what D.A. Carson writes and we turn it into a question. So if you've read the book, you know the answers.

All right, these are not complicated questions. So what will work against this process of you growing in the love in Christ for God and others? Self-for-send.

Yeah, yep, yep, yep, yep. Now, do I have, do I put the answer? Oh, you know what? I don't have the answer there. All right, I didn't put the answer on the slide. Obstacle of growing in one's knowledge of God if you're full of bitterness or self-centered sins.

Right? He talks about that there in the middle of 23. The kind of love that Paul has in mind is the love that becomes more knowledgeable.

Oh, this answers the first question. Of course, Paul is not thinking of just any kind of knowledge. He's not hoping that we will learn more and more about nuclear physics or sea turtles. Right? He has in mind the knowledge of God.

[51 : 22] We talked about that. Now, the next paragraph in the middle of 23. His assumption, evidently, is that you really cannot grow in your knowledge of God if you are full of bitterness or other self-centered sins.

Do you agree with that? I'm just curious. I mean, we don't necessarily have to just take everything he says. Let's think about that. Can our love grow and grow and grow in the knowledge of God? And, at the same time, can we be bitter or centered on sin? I don't know how it's possible. Carson explains, there is a moral element in knowing God.

Of course, a person might memorize Scripture or teach Sunday school somewhere, earn a degree in theology, but that is not necessarily the same thing as growing in the knowledge of God and gaining insight into His ways.

Such growth requires, and here's the answer to the next question, what one spiritual characteristic is required for your growth in this love-informed knowledge of God and His ways for your life?

[52 : 33] Such growth requires repentance. Yeah, for those of you who have the book, we've got the bottom of 23. Yeah. It demands a lessening of our characteristic self-focus.

Or, to put it positively, it demands an increase in our love. Our love for God and our love for others. So, let's pause just a minute. Let's make sure we're tracking here.

So, the title of this section is, again, put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life. We see Paul writing, praying for the Philippians, and his prayer is that their love may abound more and more with all knowledge and all discernment.

So, is there anything, even though Paul doesn't directly address this, but Carson does, is there anything as believers that would hinder us from growing unbounded with the love of God?

And Carson is saying, yeah, there's some blockers. I mean, sin's always a blocker, right? But specifically, the type of growing in love that Paul is talking about here, it's hard, if not impossible.

[53 : 47] And again, Carson suggests there's a moral element to growing in love and knowledge about God. How can you possibly grow in the knowledge about God if you're mired in bitterness, self-sin, etc.?

And so, in order for that growth to take place, Carson's suggesting, listen, if you want to grow in love and the knowledge of God, it requires repentance.

To me, that makes sense. In my mathematical mind, I get it, right? How can you grow? In order to grow, I need to be not mired down in my sin, so to get rid of my sin and restore relationship, I've got to repent of that sin.

So there's sort of a prerequisite that goes along with that growth and understanding the Lord. It demands a lessening of our characteristic self-focus. Repentance.

Have you ever coupled that together? This was a little bit different. I hadn't thought about this, but it makes sense. But coupling together, growing unbounded in the love for God, in the love for Jesus, in our knowledge of the Lord, you have to have repentance there.

[54 : 59] You've got to have repentance. Because without repentance... Create in me a clean heart. Yeah, without repentance, you're not going to break out of that self-centeredness and the

bitterness.

Because that bitterness and self-centeredness... It's a hindrance to love. Yeah, so you're stuck on yourself. Yeah, yeah.

Well, I just think the more that I learn about God, the more I learn about His Word, the more I think that I need to change. Yeah. It opens your eyes to...

And the Holy Spirit is illuminating us in that and is showing us in that. So, to grow more, you have to... So, if you want to change, you need to repent.

Perfect. Yeah. Again, for the recording, Marvie said that the more and more you learn about the Lord, the more and more you read Scripture, the more and more you see that you need to change. And that requires repentance.

[55 : 55] I hope I summarized that correctly. One thing that just struck me is you can have a lot of knowledge of Scripture and of God and not know God.

You know, if you haven't been transformed by Him. So, you know, that seems distinctive too. Yeah. Yeah. I've said more than once, I'm afraid that there's many, many churches in America, if not the world, that are full of really smart but unsafe people.

Right? They know. Intellectually, they know. But they haven't been transformed by that knowledge. Yeah. That's scary, isn't it? That's scary. And a lot of folks, perhaps, are not even aware.

Not aware. Again, in the 10 years that Jeff and I have been ministering here, as we've gotten to know folks, we've come and gone, and some of you, right? We've had those conversations.

Oh, I'm not saved. I know a lot. But you may have heard Jeff say in the past, we hear testimonies of folks, they haven't made it personal. Jesus died for our sins.

[57 : 02] Jesus died for me. Right? That's transformation. Once the Lord opens our eyes to see that. Yeah. Great point, Carolyn.

Yeah. All right. So, there's a moral aspect of growing in love and the knowledge of God, and that's repentance. Repentance is needed. Third point that Carson makes.

And again, these are the three features of his prayer in verses 9, 10, and 11. So, the third point is that he prays that the Philippians will pursue what is best in the sight of God.

So, gospel-centered prayers are concerned with what is best for knowing God. We've talked about that. What is best for another person. And then what is best to please Jesus in all things.

Again, verse 10 says, or verse 9. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment. Talked about that. Why? So that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

[58 : 17] All right. So, Paul's love for the Philippians may abound more and more. Their love may become more knowledgeable. And we see in his prayer that they will pursue.

They will pursue what is best. They will know and approve what is excellent. And pursue. Perhaps you could even think about it. Pursue perfection, though that will never be that way.

But Paul puts it this way. And so be pure and blameless as they approach and as they arrive the day of Christ. Christ filled with righteousness that comes where?

Not from their own efforts, right? But through Jesus Christ. Why? To give glory and praise to God.

All right. So as I'm looking for the clock, as I'm looking at the clock, let me wrap up.

So Carson's point here in this third point, right? He's praying to see God glorified. That was the end of verse 11. And praised in the life of another person.

[59 : 13] It helps keep our focus, right? When we pray for them, right? Gospel priorities. It helps us fight against selfishness and pettiness in our own prayers. So as you think about putting the priorities of the gospel in our own prayer life, we see here, again, just in these three verses, 9, 10, and 11, how Paul has sort of given us an example to follow.

As we pray for others, right? In gospel praying, that will help us. That will prevent us from becoming petty and self-absorbed in our own sort of way, right?

As we seek repentance and right living in our prayers. So, again, application time. So, again, this is you tell me the answer. What does that look like?

Think of your own prayer life or as you pray with others, right? To putting the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life, of our prayer life. What's that look like?

When you leave tonight and we think about, we've talked about these couple of points, how do you apply, how do you apply this? What's that look like? I love asking this question.

[60 : 23] What's that look like? I need to see it. I'm a visual learner. Yeah, Mark. You and I talked about this the other day. Well, at least part of this is, and it's not, you know, God, thank you.

Man, I need this. Man, you know, God, can you help me do this? Can you help me with this? Being more focused on thanking God for who he is and looking at others within your church and your family and abroad and praying for how God can work for them and with them and really just kind of keeping you out of it a bit.

So you're talking about sort of the focus of your prayers and sort of... Yeah, the focus of your prayers and where that's focused. All right. Instead of being self-centered and how he can work for you.

Yeah. How your work can work for him. So if you were to inventory all of your... Like you're sort of saying, if you had an inventory, and we can do that with AI now, right?

If we're talking out loud, right? You've got an inventory of all your prayers, and then what's the predominance of those prayers, right? Is it stuff I need, earthly sort of stuff you need, or is it...

[61 : 40] About God. Yeah, about God and kingdom and others, right? That's great. That's good. That's one way it looks like. What else? In your own words and your own thoughts. What's it look like to put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life?

How do you know if you're doing that? You know, sort of be introspective about the content of what you pray for. What else? Yeah.

So praying on scripture. You can never go wrong. Praying God's holy perfect word back to him.

That's why I love our call to worships, what we do on Sunday mornings.

We read some scripture and we just pray that back on behalf of the church. Yeah, that's always a good, safe place to be all the time, praying scripture back. That's a good one. Again, it talks about the content of what we're praying, the focus of what we're praying.

All right, let me turn over to page 25. And again, as we wrap up this point, and that'll be it for tonight, let me read what Carson says on page 25 about this. So I'll start with the first full paragraph.

[63 : 02] That is what Paul prays for. It takes only a moment's reflection to see that all these petitions, and this is from the previous paragraph that we've talked about, that all these petitions are gospel centered.

They're gospel prayers. That is, they are prayers offered to advance the work of the gospel in the lives of the Philippian believers. And by asking for gospel fruit in their lives, the ultimate purpose of these petitions is to bring glory to the God who redeemed them.

All right, so he's referring back to, if you had to summarize verses 9, 10, and 11, what Paul prayed for, it's this. They're gospel centered, gospel prayers. Prayers offered to advance the work of the gospel in the lives of the Philippian believers.

How much do such petitions feature in our praying? All right, so here's where he starts to meddle. When was the last time you prayed that your brothers and sisters in Christ in your congregation would abound in love more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that they might discern the best things and prove them out in their own experience, being filled with the fruit of righteousness to the glory and praise of God.

That's verses 9, 10, and 11. It's like, wow, that was a mouthful. I wish I could pray like Paul. You could pray like Paul. Tonight, we've just went over, just pray back verses 9, 10, and 11.

[64 : 31] And when you pray that, think of your church family. Think of your family. Think of your friends who are believers, right? Think of the church community, right? This is how you put the priority of the gospel at the center of your prayer life.

What do you pray for? Thank God that some do pray along these lines. But many of us devote most of our praying. Mark, this was the point you were making. But many of us devote most of our praying in private and in public to personal matters largely removed from gospel interest.

Our mortgages, our physical safety, our good health, employment for ourselves or someone else. Now, doubtless these and countless other concerns are legitimate subjects for prayer.

After all, we serve a God who invites us to cast all our cares on Him because He cares for us. So again, Carson's saying it's not bad to share your heart to the Lord for practical daily needs, right? But then he says three lines from the bottom. But where is our gospel focus in this? Read through the letters of Paul in Scripture. Copy out his prayers. Ask yourself, what is it that he asks for?

[65 : 45] Observe how consistently most of his petitions are gospel-related. On top of page 26. Are we being faithful to Scripture if most of our petitions are not?

Put the gospel first. And that means you must put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life. So again, it's just like the previous point with our relationship with fellow believers. It's a matter of focus and priority. So tonight, we haven't gone as far as I was hoping, but that's okay. That's okay. We focused on two main points, right? It's putting the gospel first in our relationships with fellow believers.

Putting the gospel first in our prayer life. I think that's a reasonable, maybe homework assignment for us. Sort of meditate on that. Think through that in the days to come. As we encourage one another and exhort one another in sanctification, right?

As we draw closer to him, as we conform more to his image. And these are great examples out of these first few verses in Philippians. So we just dove back in. We didn't make it very far, but it's not a race, right?

[66 : 52] It's as Paul writes, right? I thank my God in all my remembrance of you. As we pray, one of the aspects of being gospel-centered is just to thank the Lord for his provision and all that he does.

And then pray again that our love may abound more and more, more and more. And then we grow in the knowledge of the Lord. So great example. Hey, plagiarism is good here. It's okay. You can copy Paul's prayers, pray them back, and adjust them to the context at hand.

So let me encourage you to do that. Mark, not to put you on the spot, would you pray for us? Close us out. And speaking of prayer, let's see if you can apply what we just talked about. No, I'm just kidding. I see food.

I see food in the pastor room. So if you wouldn't mind also blessing our refreshments, then we'll be dismissed. Thank you, brother. Lord, Father, God Almighty, we just praise you for this evening.

Thank you for this time of fellowship that you have given us to spend together. Lord, we just ask that the time that we do spend together, that it is profitable and it is praising of you.

[68 : 02] Lord, we ask that as we dismiss and we enjoy the food that you have given us, that we ask that you bless that food, the nourishment of our bodies.

Lord, we ask that as we leave here this evening for us to remember the things that Paul has taught us in the Philippines and as we are learning through here.

Let's pray.