

Neighborhood Communion Group
Discussion Questions
The Church, part 1

Background

The idea behind neighborhood communion groups arose from the earliest Christian communities that gathered regularly in homes for a time of eating and talking, something often missing in our busy lives. As you gather with friends, think of it as a throwback to the early church, or a dinner party in our day. Below, you'll find a Scripture passage, along with some suggested questions. Neighborhood Communion is a chance to enjoy food and food for thought.

Scripture Passage

Philippians 1:1-6; 4:1-3

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4 constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5 because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.... 4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Discussion

Most scholars acknowledge the church at Philippi as being Paul's favorite, based on his repeated use of the word "joy" throughout and the letter's overall tone. But the church clearly faced challenges. The theologian Douglas John Hall claims that two things are apparent about all the churches in the New Testament: they are the bride of Christ, and the bride has her issues. Discussing these things, you might reflect on past as well as current experiences.

- 1) In chapter 1, verse 3 Paul says he is grateful to God every time he remembers them. What memories do you have from other church experiences or from our own congregation that bring a smile to your face? What makes a church joyful?

- 2) In the verses from chapter 4, Paul also acknowledges what appears to have been a spat between two women, whom he calls out by name. He then urges them to be of the "same mind," which doesn't mean they should agree on everything but have a spirit of understanding. What sorts of church conflicts have you witnessed or been part of? What was the outcome? What sorts of factors contribute to church fights? What kind of publicity do these spats create within the larger community?

(continued on back)

- 3) In chapter 1, verse 6, Paul says he is confident God who began the good work among them will bring it to completion. Do you think that's a blanket promise that can be applied to all situations? And what about the qualifier, "by the day of Jesus Christ"? That seems to imply it could be a long time in the making. How do you think of the church as both bride of Christ and having her issues?