



HG198 Annual District Church Meeting 2020  
**Being Thankful**

Philippians 1:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

26 April 2020 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and other  
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

What have you most learned about yourself during the  
COVID-19 lockdown?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs  
of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using  
Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Philippians 1:1-11

Home Group Sermon

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## Introduction

It's been a challenging time not being able to worship together these past few weeks and every Sunday morning I've thought about what would normally take place. I'm usually in church at 7.30 am, check the radiators are on, spend some time in quiet prayer, open the safe, put out the service sheets, At About 8.00 ish either Alan or Jonathan will arrive – I normally have a black coffee ready for Alan! We have our 8.30 am service and, just before we finish at 9.15 am, members of the worship band gather in the lobby ready to rehearse for the 10.30 am service. In between I tweak my sermon, have a brew, set up the PowerPoint and speak to folk as they arrive. I think about who sits where, the prayer ministry team gathering in the chapel to pray. The point is this, every Sunday morning I keep thinking about you, the church family of Emmanuel. I've missed each one of you – young and old alike! Probably more so because I spent three months on sabbatical last summer.

We should be holding our AGM today and, though we won't be holding this until later in the year, I'm still going to preach what I'd planned for today.

In the beginning of his letter, Paul, speaks of his love and appreciation for the church at Philippi, he reveals his desire to visit them and he tells them that he prays for them regularly. Furthermore, he shares with them exactly what his prayer for them is. I want to walk through these verses this morning and preach "A Church Appreciation Sermon!" There are three things I want to share with you today. I Want To Share: 1) My Gratitude With You; My Love For You and 3) My Prayer For You.

## 1. I Want To Share My Thankfulness With You vs1-6

God has done, is doing, and will continue to do, some great things amongst us. I'm so thankful to have been called to be part of this church! I'm thankful for your love, your friendship, support, generosity of spirit, your prayers and your willingness to take risks. There are many other reasons I'm thankful and these opening verses in Philippians illustrate a few of them. In June I'll begin my 13<sup>th</sup> year as Team Rector and I love being part of the Emmanuel church family. Like Paul:

*a. I am thankful for the leaders at Emmanuel, vs1: "To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons."* Paul was with Timothy and Silvanus as he penned this letter. But the letter was also addressed to the 'overseers and deacons' of this church. Paul praised the leaders for their faithfulness.

We have some amazing leaders at Emmanuel. Godly people who are in leadership roles but possess servant hearts. I am thankful for each member of the Leadership Team, DCC, those who Preach, - I've never had anything but 100% support. I'm thankful for those who lead our children's work, lead Home Groups. Not only am I grateful for the leaders of this church:

*b. I am thankful for the members of Emmanuel, vs1a: "To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi ..."* I am so thankful for each person who walks through our doors each week and is faithful in their attendance.

Each member of Emmanuel adds something to our church family. When you are not with us, we notice your absence. I am also thankful for: Those who clean; Those who take care of the building; Those who work on the grounds; Those who teach in Heroes, Trinity Tribe and Messy Church; Those who sing; Those who play an instrument; Those who give faithfully; Those who work in the office; Those who welcome; Those who serve on prayer ministry. Those that serve on committees and many others that I have failed to mention.

Whatever you do, it does not go unnoticed, and even though you may not get much recognition: God sees everything! And though I may not tell you often enough: I am grateful for you. Let me also say, like Paul:

**c. I am thankful for the labour of the members of Emmanuel**, vs3-5: *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”* Paul says the people of Philippi were actively involved in his ministry. They were “fellow-laborers” They worked with him and they supported him.

As you well know, I am far from a one man show! We are partners together in the ministry of this church and for that I am eternally grateful!! Earlier I mentioned many jobs here that require physical effort, but what about the ‘spiritual’ labour many of you perform? You visit; You make calls; You write letters; You invite others; You pray for others; You pray with others: You witness to others. You share the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. On top of all that, you are faithful in supporting mission organisations - at home and abroad.

I am proud to say we are a Bible centred church and our focus is on Jesus. We work together, in many different ways, to promote the gospel. Whether through the ministry of this church in our community, or the wider impact of our Mission Focus Sundays, countless lives have been touched and I’m thankful for that. Let me also say that, like Paul:

**d. I am thankful for the ministry of Emmanuel**, vs6: *“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”* Paul states that God began a great work in those at Philippi and performed a work in the individual lives of those believers. He also began a great work in the ministry of this church as we remind ourselves that Emmanuel will be 28 years old in June!

And whether you have been here since the beginning, for years or even for months, it is God who has begun a great work in you. And through your faithfulness, God is doing a great work amongst us. I want each one of you to know that I am thankful for you! Not only would I like to share my thankfulness with you ...

## **2. I Want To Share My Love For You vs7-8**

*“It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me.”* <sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.” Paul states that the church at Philippi has a special place in his heart.

He says that he has great love for them, and he desires to come and visit with them again. I echo Paul’s sentiment. Emmanuel does, and always will. have a special place in my heart. During my time here I have made friendships that will last a lifetime. We have been through so much together. I have been with you during some difficult times in your lives. You have been there beside me through some difficult times in mine. We have rejoiced together as your children and grandchildren were born. We have cried and grieved together as you have said goodbye to loved ones who have passed on.

I have baptized many of you, officiated at your weddings and funerals. You have watched Ben and Annabel grow up and welcomed Beth. Our family has inherited a whole new family. We have praised together; we have worshiped together; we have prayed together; we have wept together, and we have laughed together. We have celebrated the 18<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> birthdays of our church building together - not many clergy can claim a trinity of such significance.

And you have endured over 300 sermons/talks that I have preached (at an average of 30 minutes per sermon that is over 150 hours you have spent listening to my ramblings!). There is no way for me to put into words just how much I appreciate you. So, you will have to take my word for it when I say: I love each one of you. Not only would I like to share my gratitude with you and my love for you:

### **3. I Want To Share My Prayer For You vs9-11**

Paul told the church at Philippi back in vs3-4 that he prayed for them daily: *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.”* Now here in these next few verses Paul tells them what it is that he prays for on their behalf.

- He prayed that their love would grow.
- He prayed that their knowledge and understanding would increase.
- He desired that they lived Holy lives until Jesus’ return.
- He wanted them to be fruitful.
- And ultimately, he prayed that their lives would glorify the Father.

I want you to know that I pray for you regularly and, like Paul, I want to share what my prayer is for you:

**a. I pray you will be focused,** vs9: *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,”* Paul’s desire was that their love would abound and that they would keep on growing in knowledge and wisdom. I pray the same for you. Emmanuel is one of the most loving congregations you could wish to find.

It’s my prayer this love will continue to increase!

- I pray that your love for love for one another will increase!
- I pray that your love for love for the un-churched will increase!
- I pray that your love for love for lost will increase!
- I pray that your love for love for Jesus will increase!
- I also pray that your knowledge of the scriptures will continue to grow. Not only your knowledge but your wisdom as well.

We have some very wise and knowledgeable believers in this church. We also have some who are hungry and searching. One of the greatest things I see in Emmanuel right now is people growing and maturing spiritually. I pray that continues! Not only do I pray that you will be focused:

**b. I pray you will be faithful,** vs10: *“So that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”* It was Paul’s desire for the believers at Philippi to live pure and blameless lives until Jesus’ return. I pray that each one of you will be what God would have you to be. I pray that you would do what He has called you to do! If you have a job in this church, I pray that you will be faithful and devoted. For those of you who live Christian lives in the workplace, I pray that you will be faithful. We all have an obligation to be holy and I pray that we are faithful to do just that! Not only is it my prayer that you are focused and faithful:

**c. I pray you will be fruitful,** vs11: *“Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.”*

Paul prayed that the Philippian believers would be filled with the fruits of righteousness. I too pray that you will live lives that are fruitful! Paul here is referring to the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ. The result of living fruitful and righteous lives is that God will receive honour, glory and praise.

With all the good things that we could say about Emmanuel, none of it matters if it is all about us! Everything we do is vain unless Christ is the focus!

The ultimate goal and sole purpose of Emmanuel Church must be to bring honour and glory to our Lord! And I believe that that is the case. Let, us not lose sight, let us continue to move forward for Him.

### **Conclusion**

Maybe you feel that you are just someone who attends this church and that you have no impact. Let me assure you: **You are wrong!** Every person has an impact. Each of you add something special to our church family. Some of you may be concerned that you are not having much of an eternal impact. Let me remind you that there are often results in our mission and ministry that are not visible. There is no way for you to know just how much of an impact you are having. In this life:

- You may never see the impact that your prayers have had.
- You may never know the seed that was planted in the lives of those children in Mini-Heroes, Heroes or Trinity Tribe.
- You may never see the result of that money you gave to mission.
- You may never know what that visit, call or letter means to those you have reached out to.
- You may never see the growth in the life of the Home Group you lead.
- You may never realise the blessing you are to others with how you sing or play that instrument.

And so, I could go on. The results of ministry are never immediate, and they are often not visible, but they are eternal! Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-20: *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

Each one of us are all called, and equipped, to serve and each of us have a strategic role to fulfil in the mission and ministry of Emmanuel - age, even Christian experience, isn't a barrier. What might God be calling you to do to serve Emmanuel in the year to come? There are many opportunities to do so. What's holding you back?

## **Emmanuel Church Text for 2020**

*“The Lord Your God is with you. He is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with  
His love. He will rejoice over you with singing.”*

**Zephaniah 3:17**



## **Looking Upwards** (40 mins)

### *Bible Study*

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1.** What have you missed most about Emmanuel during the COVID-19 lockdown?

**2.** What are you most thankful for about Emmanuel?

**3.** What would you most want to share with someone, who isn't a Christian, about what you enjoy most about Emmanuel?

**4.** What is your prayer for Emmanuel for the next 12 months?

**5.** Can you recall someone who had a significant impact on your Christian life? Have you ever told them? Is it about time you did?

**6.** What might God be calling you to do to serve Emmanuel in the year to come? There are many opportunities to do so. What's holding you back?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## **Looking Inwards** (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



## **Looking Outwards** (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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*Part of The Billericay & Little Burstead Team Ministry*