



### **OPENING PRAYER/WORSHIP** (10 minutes)

"Lord God: We come to You with thanksgiving and joy for our relationship with You and other believers. We ask that You open our minds and hearts so we may grow in our relationships with each other as Your servant Paul did with the Philippians.

(Special prayer requests and/or thanksgivings may be added here.) In Jesus' name. Amen."

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPECIAL OFFERINGS** (5 minutes)

#### **GETTING STARTED** (20 minutes)

Have each group member share one feeling they consider important in a close Christian relationship, even if they've never had one. Make a list of these feelings for reference later in discussing Paul's feelings for the Philippians. Ask group members why they consider the chosen feeling important. Have them share this information with the group. (Remember to encourage all members to share. Try to make sure no one feels pressured into sharing anything uncomfortable. Make a discussion out of it.)

#### **HEARING THE WORD** (10 minutes)

Help the group members find this passage in the Bible. Encourage people to bring Bibles to the group meetings. Ask them to read the Bible at home. Tell them that you can discuss the questions they have at one of the meetings. If they are interested in it – make a “press conference” group meeting. This is when people will ask questions and you (and, may be, other members of the group) answer them.

Let's see what important features we can discover about Paul's relationship with the Philippians. *"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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, 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. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, **since I have you in my heart**; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."* Philippians 1:1-11

#### **DOING THE WORD** (10 minutes)

Ask the group,

- "What features does Paul mention in the third verse that appears to be the basis of his closeness to the people at Philippi?" (Thanksgiving, Prayer, Joy, and Love)

Discuss with the members of the group the importance of these four qualities (thanksgiving, prayer, joy, and love) in building close Christian relationships as Paul did:

- We should thank God for one another.
- We should pray for one another.
- We should be joyful for one another.
- We should expect "love may abound."

#### **SHARING PRAYER CONCERNS/ANSWERS** (5 minutes)

##### **GROUP PRAYER** (15 minutes)

Have the group members make a circle in the middle of the room and hold hands. Let them pray for the person that stands to the right (you discussed each other's need, so they should know) and then for the person to the left. In this way, they will start feeling concern for each other. After that, lead them, as the leader, in a joint prayer for unity in the group.