

Out of Context

Small Group Guide — Week 1

Scripture: Philippians 4:10–13

For the Facilitator

This week centers on one of the most familiar verses in the Bible: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." In context, Paul is not talking about achievement or success. He is talking about contentment in every circumstance.

Stay close to the text. Help the group notice what Paul actually says before discussing how the verse is commonly used.

As the discussion unfolds, help the group see how Philippians 4 connects to themes Paul has already developed earlier in the letter.

1. Opening (5 min)

When you hear the phrase "being strong," what comes to mind?

2. Read the Text (10 min)

Read Philippians 4:10–13 aloud together.

Then ask:

- What stands out to you?
- What words or ideas repeat?
- What do you learn about Paul's circumstances from this passage?

3. Guided Reflection (20 min)

Pause between questions. Let them sit.

- Before reading this passage tonight, what did you assume Philippians 4:13 meant?
- Looking at the surrounding verses, what does Paul actually seem to mean by "all things"?
- Paul mentions both abundance and need. Why do you think he intentionally includes both?
- Paul says he has "learned the secret" of being content. What stands out to you about that language? Why might contentment be something learned rather than something people naturally possess?
- Read Philippians 1:19–26. What do you notice about Paul's perspective on his circumstances? What seems most important to him in that passage?
- Read Philippians 3:7–11. What do you notice about what Paul values most? How might that help explain the contentment he describes in chapter 4?
- Looking across all three passages, what do you think Paul means when he says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me"?
- How is Paul's vision of strength different from the way our culture often talks about strength, success, or confidence?

4. Connecting to the Week (5–8 min)

Was there anything from the sermon or the daily worship devotional that you were hoping we'd talk about tonight?

Let a few people share.

If something connects to the text, follow it briefly.

5. Let It Land (10–15 min)

Paul's contentment doesn't seem to come from controlling his circumstances. It comes from knowing Christ and trusting him in every circumstance.

- Which of Paul's circumstances do you relate to more right now: abundance, need, success, disappointment, certainty, or uncertainty?
- Where are you most tempted to measure your life by outcomes rather than faithfulness?
- What would it look like to pursue faithfulness even if your circumstances didn't change?
- What do you sense the Spirit might be saying to you through this passage?

You might name it as:

- a call to steadiness
- an invitation to trust Christ more deeply
- a reminder that faithfulness matters more than outcomes

Give space. No need to explain or resolve.

6. Prayer (5–10 min)

Let's take a moment to respond to what we've heard.

You may want to pray silently, or offer a short prayer aloud.

You can use simple prayers like:

- "Lord, teach me contentment."
- "Help me trust you in every circumstance."
- "Help me find my confidence in you."

Close in prayer together, thanking God for his faithfulness in every season and asking for hearts that remain anchored in Christ whether circumstances are easy or difficult.

Out of Context

Small Group Guide — Week 2

Scripture: Matthew 7:1–5

For the Facilitator

This week centers on one of Jesus' most quoted commands: "Do not judge." In context, Jesus is confronting hypocrisy, not prohibiting all moral discernment or accountability.

Stay close to the text. Let Jesus' imagery and language do the work.

Avoid turning the conversation into a debate about culture, politics, or what "other people" are doing wrong. The passage is aimed first at the reader.

1. Opening (5 min)

Why do you think people react so strongly to criticism or judgment?

2. Read the Text (10 min)

Read Matthew 7:1–5 aloud together.

Then ask:

- What stands out to you?
- What images or contrasts do you notice?
- What seems to be Jesus' main concern in this passage?

3. Guided Reflection (20 min)

Pause between questions. Let them sit.

- When people quote "Do not judge," what do they usually mean by it?
- Looking carefully at the passage, what does Jesus actually seem to be warning against?
- Why do you think it is often easier to recognize faults in other people than in ourselves?
- Jesus uses intentionally exaggerated imagery—a plank and a speck. What effect does that image have on you?
- According to Jesus, what is the danger of ignoring our own sin while focusing on someone else's?
- Read Matthew 18:15–17. What does this passage suggest about Jesus' expectations for life together among his followers?
- Read Hebrews 3:12–13. What responsibility do Christians have toward one another according to this passage?
- How do Matthew 18 and Hebrews 3 help clarify what Jesus is—and isn't—saying in Matthew 7?
- If you had to summarize all three passages together, what would you say Christians are called to do when they see sin in themselves or in one another?

4. Connecting to the Week (5–8 min)

Was there anything from the sermon or the daily worship devotional that you were hoping we'd talk about tonight?

Let a few people share.

If something connects to the text, follow it briefly.

5. Let It Land (10–15 min)

Jesus' warning is not against honesty about sin. It is against approaching others without first being honest about ourselves.

- Are you more likely to struggle with harsh judgment of others, avoidance of hard truths, or some combination of both?
- What makes genuine self-examination difficult?
- Hebrews 3:13 calls Christians to encourage one another daily so that sin doesn't harden our hearts. Matthew 18 calls believers to address sin when necessary. Matthew 7 warns against hypocrisy and judgmentalism. What does it look like for a Christian community to hold all three of those together?
- As you think about this group, where do you see signs of that balance already? Where might there be room to grow?
- What do you sense the Spirit might be saying to you through this passage?

You might name it as:

- a call to humility
- an invitation to honest repentance
- a reminder of God's mercy

Give space. No need to explain or resolve.

6. Prayer (5–10 min)

Let's take a moment to respond to what we've heard.

You may want to pray silently, or offer a short prayer aloud.

You can use simple prayers like:

- "Lord, show me what I need to see."
- "Teach me humility."
- "Help me receive your mercy and extend it to others."

Close in prayer together, thanking God that he knows us completely, forgives us fully in Christ, and continues his work of changing us.

Out of Context

Small Group Guide — Week 3

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:6–10

For the Facilitator

This week centers on another familiar Bible phrase: "Money is the root of all evil." In context, Paul warns about the pursuit of wealth and the dangers that come when accumulating more becomes a driving goal in life.

Stay close to the text. Let Paul's warning carry its full weight.

Avoid turning the discussion into a debate about how much money is too much. Focus instead on what Paul says about contentment, ambition, and the purpose of our work and resources.

1. Opening (5 min)

What messages about money or success do people hear most often in our culture?

2. Read the Text (10 min)

Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 aloud together.

Then ask:

- What stands out to you?
- What words or ideas repeat?
- What warnings or contrasts do you notice?

3. Guided Reflection (20 min)

Pause between questions. Let them sit.

- When people quote, "Money is the root of all evil," what do they usually mean?
- Looking carefully at the passage, what does Paul actually say?
- Verse 6 says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Why do you think Paul begins there?
- Paul describes the pursuit of wealth as a temptation, a trap, and a snare. Why do you think the pursuit of "more" can be spiritually dangerous?
- Why do you think Paul's warning can be difficult to hear in a culture that often treats financial success as one of life's highest goals?
- Read Philippians 4:10–13. How does Paul's description of contentment help illuminate what he means in 1 Timothy 6?
- Read 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12 and Ephesians 4:28. What do these passages suggest about the purpose of work, money, and ambition?
- Looking across all four passages, what would you say Paul is warning us against, and what is he inviting us toward?

4. Connecting to the Week (5–8 min)

Was there anything from the sermon or the daily worship devotional that you were hoping we'd talk about tonight?

Let a few people share.

If something connects to the text, follow it briefly.

5. Let It Land (10–15 min)

Paul warns about the pursuit of wealth, but he doesn't leave us with a warning alone. Throughout his letters, he points to something better: the surpassing worth of knowing Christ and belonging to him.

- Where do you see pressure in our culture to pursue "more" as an end in itself?
- What is the difference between pursuing wealth and pursuing faithful work that serves God and neighbor?
- In Philippians 3, Paul says that knowing Christ is worth more than anything he has left behind. How might that kind of confidence free a person from being trapped by the pursuit of more?
- What do you sense the Spirit might be saying to you through this passage?

You might name it as:

- a warning about misplaced trust
- a call to contentment
- a renewed confidence in the riches we have in Christ

Give space. No need to explain or resolve.

6. Prayer (5–10 min)

Let's take a moment to respond to what we've heard.

You may want to pray silently, or offer a short prayer aloud.

You can use simple prayers like:

- "Lord, teach me contentment."
- "Help me trust you more than my possessions."
- "Guide me toward faithfulness in my work and resources."

Close in prayer together, thanking God for his provision and asking for hearts that are free to serve him, love their neighbors, and treasure Christ above all else.

Out of Context

Small Group Guide — Week 4

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:1–14

For the Facilitator

This week centers on another familiar verse: “For I know the plans I have for you.” In context, God is speaking to his people in exile, promising eventual restoration while also teaching them how to live faithfully where they are.

Stay close to the full passage. Help the group notice both the promise and the waiting.

Avoid turning the discussion into either cynicism about the verse or easy reassurance. Let the text give a deeper kind of hope.

1. Opening (5 min)

When life feels uncertain, what kinds of reassurance do people usually look for?

2. Read the Text (10 min)

Read Jeremiah 29:1–14 aloud together.

Then ask:

- What stands out to you?
- What instructions does God give his people?
- What promises does God make?

3. Guided Reflection (20 min)

Pause between questions. Let them sit.

- When people quote Jeremiah 29:11, what do they usually hope it means?
- Looking at the wider passage, what is the actual situation of the people receiving this promise?
- God tells the exiles to build houses, plant gardens, have families, and seek the welfare of the city. What do those instructions suggest about how they are to live while they wait?
- Why do you think God gives his people both a long-term promise and ordinary present-tense responsibilities?
- Verse 7 tells them to seek the welfare of the city where they have been sent. What might have made that command difficult to receive?
- Read Romans 8:18–25. What connections do you see between waiting, hope, and future restoration in Romans 8 and Jeremiah 29?
- How does the promise of future restoration change the way God’s people live in difficult or unwanted circumstances now?
- Looking across both passages, what would you say God is promising, and what is he calling his people to do while they wait?

4. Connecting to the Week (5–8 min)

Was there anything from the sermon or the daily worship devotional that you were hoping we'd talk about tonight?

Let a few people share.

If something connects to the text, follow it briefly.

5. Let It Land (10–15 min)

Jeremiah 29 does not promise that every circumstance will quickly become what we hoped. It does promise that God has not abandoned his people, and that they can live with purpose while they wait for his restoration.

- Where do you feel some kind of “exile” right now — a place where life is not what you hoped, expected, or wanted?
- What would it look like to seek faithfulness and the good of others in that place?
- How might God’s promise of final restoration give you peace without requiring immediate relief?
- What do you sense the Spirit might be saying to you through this passage?

You might name it as:

- a call to faithfulness where you are
- an invitation to seek the good of others
- a renewed confidence in God’s future restoration

Give space. No need to explain or resolve.

6. Prayer (5–10 min)

Let’s take a moment to respond to what we’ve heard.

You may want to pray silently, or offer a short prayer aloud.

You can use simple prayers like:

- “Lord, help me be faithful where I am.”
- “Teach me to seek the good of others.”
- “Give me hope while I wait.”

Close in prayer together, thanking God that he is faithful to his promises and asking for courage, patience, and purpose in the places where life still feels unresolved.

Out of Context

Small Group Guide — Week 5

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

For the Facilitator

This week centers on a phrase many people assume is in the Bible: “God won’t give you more than you can handle.” In context, Paul is talking about temptation, not a general promise that life will always remain manageable.

Stay close to the text. Let Paul’s warning and encouragement both speak.

Avoid turning the discussion into shallow reassurance. The passage calls us away from self-sufficiency and toward dependence on the faithful God who delivers, forgives, and strengthens.

1. Opening (5 min)

When people say, “God won’t give you more than you can handle,” what do you think they are usually trying to communicate?

2. Read the Text (10 min)

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 aloud together.

Then ask:

- What stands out to you?
- What warnings do you notice?
- What encouragements do you notice?

3. Guided Reflection (20 min)

Pause between questions. Let them sit.

- What is the difference between the phrase “God won’t give you more than you can handle” and what Paul actually says in verse 13?
- Paul points back to Israel’s wilderness story. What examples or warnings does he draw from that story?
- Why do you think Paul reminds the Corinthians that God’s people before them had received real gifts from God and still fell into sin?
- Verse 12 says, “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” What kind of self-confidence is Paul warning against?
- Verse 13 says God is faithful and will provide a way of escape in temptation. What does that tell us about God’s character?
- Read James 1:12–15. What does this passage show us about how temptation works?
- Read Matthew 4:1–11. What do you notice about how Jesus faces temptation in the wilderness?
- Looking at 1 Corinthians 10, James 1, and Matthew 4 together, what do these passages teach us about temptation, human weakness, and God’s faithfulness?

4. Connecting to the Week (5–8 min)

Was there anything from the sermon or the daily worship devotional that you were hoping we'd talk about tonight?

Let a few people share.

If something connects to the text, follow it briefly.

5. Let It Land (10–15 min)

Paul does not promise that life will always stay within our capacity. He does promise that God is faithful in temptation. And in Christ, we see one who entered the wilderness, faced temptation, and remained faithful.

- Where are you tempted to believe you should be able to handle things on your own?
- What is the difference between asking God for strength and pretending you are already strong enough?
- Where might God be providing a “way of escape” from temptation through prayer, Scripture, honesty, community, or a concrete next step?
- What do you sense the Spirit might be saying to you through this passage?

You might name it as:

- a warning against self-sufficiency
- an invitation to ask for help
- a renewed trust in Christ’s faithfulness

Give space. No need to explain or resolve.

6. Prayer (5–10 min)

Let’s take a moment to respond to what we’ve heard.

You may want to pray silently, or offer a short prayer aloud.

You can use simple prayers like:

- “Lord, help me depend on you.”
- “Show me the way of escape.”
- “Strengthen me where I am weak.”

Close in prayer together, thanking God that Christ has entered the wilderness before us, and asking for strength, humility, and courage to receive his help in temptation.