

engage

engage issue 8 is here, and we're very excited about it. God's word is constantly surprising and challenging. He wants to speak to you directly from the Bible, so get ready to have your mind blown as you dig into His word and read articles on some seriously tricky topics.

* **DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: Explore the future with **Philippians**; discover real devotion in **Deuteronomy**; see the big finale of Jesus' life in **Luke**; sing along with **Jeremiah**; and get back to praising God with **Psalms**.

* **TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

* **REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **the story of Omar, brought up in a Muslim home and a Catholic school**.

* **ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we ask: **Why does sin matter so much?**



* **STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **War – is it right or wrong?**

* **TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you understand the Bible. This issue we concentrate on **Big Bible words**.

* **TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions our friends bombard us with. This time: **How do I become a Christian?**

All of us who work on **engage** are passionate to see God's word at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first **engage** study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say "**Read Luke 6 v 1–5**", look up Luke in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Luke starts on. Find chapter 6 of Luke, and then verse 1 of chapter 6 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

In this issue...

DAILY READINGS

Philippians: Enjoying your future now

Deuteronomy: Devoted to God

Luke: The big finale

Jeremiah: Same old song?

Psalms: Singing God's praises

ARTICLES

REAL LIVES

Good enough for God? **18**

ESSENTIAL

Sin — what's the big deal? **36**

STUFF

War **50**

TOOLBOX

Big Bible words **70**

TRICKY

How do I become a Christian? **90**

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Philippians

Enjoying your future now

Have you ever looked forward to something so much you've not been able to think about anything else? Maybe a holiday coming up, or a big night out, or the end of exams.

LOOKING FORWARD

That upcoming event makes you excited and happy. How you feel is being directed not by how things are in the present, but how they will be in the future. The week before I go on holiday, I'm always cheery, not because I love going to work, but because I know that next week I'll be lying on a beach.

What we're looking forward to in the future directs how we feel, and how we act, in the present.

FUTURE PERFECT

Paul, the guy who wrote this letter to a church in the Greek city of Phillipi in 60AD-ish, wanted his Christian friends to feel joyful. Not to rejoice because of how things were in the



present, but how they would be in the future.

Paul knew that anyone who followed Jesus would have eternal life. So he was joyful, even though he was writing from prison. He didn't love prison, but he loved knowing that one day he'd be with Jesus for ever.

What we're looking forward to in the future directs how we feel and how we act in the present. Philippians encourages us to be like Paul — looking forward so much to eternal life that we just can't stop thinking, and rejoicing, and talking about it.



1

I've started so I'll finish

Some people (like me!) are very good at starting jobs and very bad at finishing them. What about the Christian life? What if you make a good start, but don't finish?

Read Philippians 1 v 1–2

Saints in Christ Jesus = Christ Jesus' people who are different and distinctive = Christians!

Read verses 3–11

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What does Paul do when he remembers his Christian friends in Philippi? (v3)*
- How does he pray? (v4)*

Paul prays like this because they're his Christian brothers and sisters, who've supported him (v5). But shouldn't he worry about them keeping going in their faith?

- What's Paul confident of? (v6)*
- Who's in charge of starting and finishing the true Christian life?*

God always finishes what He's started!

THINK IT THROUGH

- If you're a Christian, how does v6*

give you great confidence?

And so, in v9–11, Paul gets on with praying confidently and joyfully. He wants his Christian friends to grow in a love which knows Jesus more (*knowledge*) and understands Jesus more (*insight*); and in a lifestyle which knows how to live (*discern what's best*) and which puts it into practice (being *pure and blameless*). And he wants them to grow like this until "the day of Christ" (v10), when Jesus returns and God finishes what He's started in every Christian.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Choose three Christian friends and pray for them each day this week, reflecting in your prayers how Paul prayed for his Christian friends.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God always finishes what He's started.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Start here and finish on page 109.

2

Paul's priorities

**What makes you happy? Your team winning?
Your grades improving? Your wardrobe overflowing?**

 **Read Philippians 1 v 12–19**
ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Quick check on Paul's situation:

-  *From v13–14, can you work out where Paul is?*
-  *What are some people trying to do to him while he's there? (v17)*

Paul's lost all his comforts. Paul's losing his reputation. Never mind his clothes and his job, Paul doesn't even have his freedom.

-  *But what is Paul doing? (last two sentences of v18)*

Amazing! If I were in prison, in chains, facing death, with loads of enemies, I'd be... depressed! Frustrated! Angry! I definitely wouldn't be cheerily rejoicing!

-  *So why's Paul so happy?*
-  *What's the priority for Paul? (v18)*

This is the key to understanding why Paul's still smiling. His priority

isn't pursuing comfort; it's preaching Christ. So he's OK with prison, because he's been able to tell the guards about Christ (v13). He's OK with the chains, because it's encouraged other Christians to talk about Jesus (v14). He's OK with some people preaching Christ just to get him into trouble (v17), because (you guessed it) it means people hear about Jesus. If Paul's priority was pursuing comfort, he'd be depressed; but Paul's priority's preaching Christ, so he's rejoicing!

THINK IT THROUGH

-  *What should make Christians rejoice?*
-  *How must your priorities shift?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for the chances He gives us to preach Christ — tell people about Jesus. Pray that you'd have Paul's priorities in life.

 **TAKE IT FURTHER**

Priority number 1 — go to p109.



3

A matter of life and death

Prepare to be hugely encouraged and massively challenged by just nine words...

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ix *What kind of things do people put at the centre of their lives to make them happy and content?*
- ix *What does death do to these things?*

Many people think life is about getting a good job and a decent salary. Some claim life is about experiencing as many things as you can. Others have different ideas. The problem with whatever you base your life on is that death means losing it: *to live is to be popular... to die is to lose it*. Wouldn't it be great to have something to live for which death can't take away?

Read Philippians 1 v 20–26

Then re-read v21.

- ix *What's Paul living for?*
- ix *How does having Christ at the centre of Paul's life change his view of death?*

Because Christ gives life beyond death, a Christian enjoys a very different view of death. It's not the end of everything; it's the beginning of everything. If life's all about Christ, then death is great, because it means being with Jesus — *"which is better by far"* (v23).

If you're a Christian, here's the encouragement; death is gain, not loss. If you're a Christian, here's the challenge; would someone looking at your life say that for you, to live is (all about) Christ?

THINK IT THROUGH

Can you say "to live is Christ" in your: ambitions? relationships? conversations?

THE BOTTOM LINE

To live is Christ and to die is gain.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Choose life on page 109.

4

Stand by me

Life as a Christian in Philippi was no bed of roses. Persecution, false teachers and doubt all loomed large. So what do you say to Christians who have life tough?

 **Read Philippians 1 v 27–30**
ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

-  *What should influence their behaviour? (v27, first sentence)*
-  *What else should the church be doing for the gospel? (end v27)*

This bunch of Christians should be like “one man” — united around the gospel. Often, churches are so busy bickering with each other that they don’t “contend” (speak out for) the gospel. Paul wants Christians to be united around the message of Jesus, so they can stand up together for the gospel.

-  *This church believes in Christ — what else are they doing for Him? (v29)*

We shouldn’t see Christian suffering as a problem, but as a privilege. Christ suffered... Paul suffered... we’ll suffer. And when we’re suffering because we’re Christians, it’s even

more important to be united with other Christians, who’ll encourage us to see it as a privilege, not a problem.

THINK IT THROUGH

-  *How should Christians react to tough times?*
-  *Why is Christian unity and support so important?*

Many Christians think they can go it alone, that they don’t need church. But God knows better! Because it’s tough to be a Christian, he’s given us the church (other Christians) to help us and for us to help others. He wants you to be part of your local church, to be united with other gospel people, so you can stand up for Christ.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Get involved in church so you can stand together for the gospel.

 **TAKE IT FURTHER**

For a little more, try page 110.



5

Attitude

“Because I’m worth it” isn’t just an advertising slogan; it’s the motto of our society. Work hard, get ahead, enjoy what you deserve. But it shouldn’t be the Christian’s motto.

Read Philippians 2 v 1–4

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Ix *Paul tells the Christians they should...*

v2:

v3:

v4:

Verse 3 is so challenging. Do NOTHING to further your own aims or reputation, but think of others as better than you. Your life should be about serving others, not enjoying what you feel you deserve. Paul’s being a bit unrealistic, isn’t he?

Read verses 5–11

Ix *Who is Jesus? (v6)*

Ix *What didn’t He do? (v6)*

Ix *What did He do? (v7–8)*

Ix *What did God think of this? (v9)*

Jesus is worth it — He’s God! But He gave up everything He deserved and was humble enough to die on a Roman cross to serve others.

Ix *So what does that mean for us? (v5)*

Here’s our motto for life — not *because I’m worth it* but *my attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*. We live Jesus Christ’s way by copying His attitude.

THINK IT THROUGH

Think of one or two specific ways in which you can give up selfish ambitions to serve others.

-
-
-

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that Jesus gave up so much to die for you. Pray that God would give you opportunities and motivation to copy Christ in your life this week.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Where is Jesus now? Turn to p110.

6

Hard at work

That great philosopher, Homer Simpson, once said: “If something’s hard, it’s not worth doing.” Paul says obeying God is hard — but keep doing it anyway!

 **Read Philippians 2 v 12–18**
ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

-  *What does Paul tell his Christian friends to keep doing? (v12)*
-  *But as we work, who is working in us? (v13)*
-  *How does this encourage us to keep working at obeying God?*
-  *Why is God working in us?*
Aim One – v13:
Aim Two – v15:
Aim Three – v16:

Obeying God is hard work — but as we do it, God’s working to do all these things through us! Amazing. And that means we should obey God in everything “*without complaining or arguing*”. It’s easy to complain to others about having to obey God, rather than loving the fact that we’re becoming His blameless and pure children. It’s easy to argue with God about obeying Him, rather than

loving being the way He shows the gospel (good news) of life to people. Obedience isn’t an annoyance to be moaned about; it’s a privilege to be welcomed!

THINK IT THROUGH

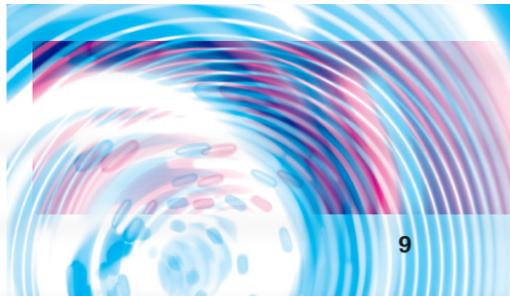
-  *How are you finding it hard to obey God?*
-  *When do you find yourself complaining about obeying God?*
-  *What do v14–16 say to you?*

THE BOTTOM LINE

As we work to obey God, He works in us to further His plans — so welcome the work, don’t grumble about it!

 **TAKE IT FURTHER**

Work it out on page 110.





7

For example...

All celebrity magazines have real-life stories about ordinary people alongside the ones about pop divas and reality TV stars. Paul's told us about Jesus' life story — now he tells us about two very ordinary Christians — guys like you and me.

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

Ix Look back to v3–5. How was Paul telling Christians to live, and who was Paul telling Christians to copy?

Read Philippians 2 v 19–24

Ix What does v20 tell us about Tim's attitude towards others?

Ix What does v22 tell us about Tim?

Ix In what order does Tim put these people? (rank them 1–3)

Himself

Jesus Christ (and His gospel)

Other people

Read verses 25–30

Ix When Epaphroditus was ill, what was he distressed about? (v26)

Ix Epaph's illness was nearly fatal (v27) — what had he been doing that had left him vulnerable to this illness? (v30)

Again, we see a man whose priority is to work for Christ instead of himself, and whose first thought is others' feelings instead of his own.

Ix Why do you think Paul includes v19–30, telling us about Timothy and Epaphroditus?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Lord, Help me to copy Jesus' attitude in what I do and say, just as Tim and Epaph did. Help me not to make excuses but to remember that if they could do it, then I can do it. Amen.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Real ordinary Christians copy Christ in their attitude — if they can do it, so can you.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Another example is on page 110.



8

Total rubbish

**Imagine you died, and at the gates of heaven
God asks: “Why should I let you in?”
What would you say?**

Read Philippians 3 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

“Confidence in the flesh” (v3, 4) means trusting in who you are or what you do to make you right with God.

1x *What reasons did Paul have for such confidence? (v4–6)*

In religious terms, Paul was the best of the best — good background, good lifestyle. There appeared to be a lot in Paul’s profit column! But...

Read verses 7–11

1x *What does Paul now think of all those things? (v7)*

1x *What does Paul now know is the most important thing? (v8–9)*

Paul had always thought he could make himself right with God by being good. He now knows that only Jesus can make us right with God.

We need to hear this again and again, as Paul says in v1, because we find it so hard to grasp and so easy to forget. We’re not right with God because of anything we do. We’re made righteous through knowing and trusting Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

1x *Are you trusting in Jesus, and not yourself, to give you eternal life with God?*

1x *Why should everything else in your life be “rubbish” compared with knowing Jesus as your Lord?*

1x *How have these verses encouraged you to rejoice about being a Christian?*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Write your own today:

TAKE IT FURTHER

Put the rubbish out on page 110.



9

Keep on running

If you're running a marathon, you look ahead, not back, and you focus on how great finishing will be! Paul tells us the Christian life is a race, and there's no time to take a rest.

Read Philippians 3 v 12–16

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- 1x *What's Paul doing? (v12)*
- 1x *Has he got to the finish line yet? (beginning of v13)*
- 1x *So what's he doing? (v14)*
- 1x *Why's it worth "pressing on"? (v14)*

In order to keep going, Paul does two things in v13...

- 1.
- 2.

Athletes may make mistakes in a race — but they don't dwell on them. If they fall over, they pick themselves up and keep on keeping on. So it is with the Christian life. When we mess up, we are forgiven — so we don't need to dwell on it for ever; we just keep on keeping on.

Athletes may be struggling in a race — but they don't look down at the endless road; they look forward to the prize at the finish line, and keep on keeping on. So it is with the Christian life. We have a great prize of perfect, eternal life to look forward to ("to die is gain", remember?), so keep on keeping on!

THINK IT THROUGH

- 1x *Since we know that there's an amazing prize at the end of it, how will this affect our view of the Christian life?*
- 1x *When the Christian life is tough, what do we need to remember?*

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Christian life is a race — keep your eyes on the prize and keep on keeping on.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Race ahead to page 111.

10

Destination known

Paul's pulling no punches today — there are two ways to live, two views about Jesus, and two final destinations.

OPTION 1** Read Philippians 3 v17–19**

Paul could be referring to the false teachers again (v18–19). They claimed obeying Jewish law was the way to be get right with God. Their god was their stomach (focusing on pleasing themselves and obeying food laws). Their glory was their shame — they boasted about being God's chosen people yet didn't live like it.

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- I** What occupied their minds? (v19)
- I** What did this make them? (v18)
- I** What was their destiny? (v19)
- I** What was Paul's plea to the Philippians? (v17)

OPTION TWO** Read 3 v 20 – 4 v 1**

- I** What is a Christian's mind fixed on? (v20)
- I** What is their destination? (v20)
- I** What will happen to their bodies when Jesus returns? (v21)

- I** So what should Christians do in the meantime? (4 v 1)

Notice that our destination in the future affects our behaviour and outlook in the present. The false teachers were foolish to focus on enjoying themselves and obeying endless laws.

GET ON WITH IT

- I** Which option are you choosing? Do you need to switch?
- I** If you're an option two person, where is your real home? (v20)
- I** How will this affect the way you live this week?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God that v20–21 will happen. Pray that you'll long for home and fix your mind on eternity with God.

 TAKE IT FURTHER

Your destination is page 111.