

1. God wants the world to know, starting with His people, that He alone is God and everything that He does is to reveal His power, authority, love and character to people.
2. Ezekiel reminds us of the responsibility that goes with being appointed a watchman in the city. If a watchman does his job and warns the people of impending danger, he cannot be held responsible if the people refuse to listen to the warning. They are responsible for their own destruction. We are the watchmen and must sound the warning.
3. Much was asked of Ezekiel, who silently (his tongue was literally incapacitated for years, except when God wanted to use it) did whatever God asked, even when it broke his heart to do it. His wife died and God did not let him mourn in public.
4. Reading Ezekiel puts a sense of anticipation in our hearts to see how his far ranging prophecies will be fulfilled.
5. We are not sure whether Ezekiel is describing an earthly scene during the millennial kingdom in the Jerusalem we know, or whether he is telling us about the New Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation. The last few chapters we read may point to the latter idea.
6. The river described in chapter 47 comes from beneath the temple and flows South and East toward the Dead Sea. As it flows it gets deeper. This is God's river; the description is supernatural. It is a river of life and turns the Dead Sea into fresh water, so it supports an abundance of life. Right now the Dead Sea is the lowest and saltiest body of water in the world.
7. According to Dr. Ironside, "Whether, therefore, Ezekiel's vision of a river will be fulfilled literally or not we do not know. Of this we may be sure: It does speak to us today of that same glorious river which is brought before us in so many other places in the word of God."
8. The second hint that Ezekiel may be using symbols to speak of the new heaven and earth described in Revelation 22 is the last sentence of the book. "And the name of the city from that time on will be Jehovah-Shammah: the Lord is there." John writes the dwelling place of God is with man and He will live with them. It may be that in these last chapters Ezekiel is looking even beyond the millennial age to the new heaven and new earth.
9. If that is so, the questions regarding the need for and function of sacrifices are all answered. The descriptions of the temple and its worship then become symbolic, meant to direct our attention to worship and our preoccupation with worship of the Lamb of God for all eternity. Ezekiel used these symbols because they are meaningful to those to whom he was writing and speaking.
10. Even the scripture that described the physical distribution of land around Ezekiel's temple vision has a parallel in the Book of Revelation. The twelve tribes in Ezekiel's vision are allotted a portion of the land of Israel within the city of Jerusalem. The city has twelve gates, one for each tribe. The description in Revelation 22 also has a gate for each tribe.
11. The issue of whether the temple of Ezekiel will be a literal one or a spiritual one has not been settled definitely for all time. I am inclined to the latter opinion, but there are some Bible scholars who would disagree with me. Now you are better able to make your own decision.

1. The church was established in Philippi on Paul's second missionary journey. Paul and Silas responded to the call Paul received one night while he was sleeping. Philippi had no synagogue, so Paul had to preach at a place down by the river where he met Lydia. They met opposition and were flogged and jailed. An earthquake came and Paul and Silas led the jailer and his family to faith in Christ. Paul was released when they found he was a Roman citizen. They were forced to leave the fledgling church after a very brief period of time.
2. Paul says, in his greeting to the Philippians, they have been partners in the missionary enterprise. They sent Epaphroditus to minister to him.
3. Paul writes this letter from Rome where he is in prison. He is uncertain what will happen in his appeal before Caesar. He wants them to pray for him. He says "for me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Paul had the attitude that he could not lose because the outcome was in God's hands.
4. Because Paul was a prisoner, the gospel was spread through the palace guard of the emperor and the church in Rome was built up.
5. There are several good verses in this passage to memorize. Philippians 1:6, Philippians 1:21, and Philippians 2:12. This last verse may need some explanation. Paul is not saying that we can earn our salvation before God. That is a matter of grace and rests on the finished work of Christ. To understand this we must look at the context in which we find the verse. This verse comes toward the end of a passage in which Paul tells the Philippians they need to come together in unity. There were some issues separating the Christians in Philippi and Paul was telling them to "work it out."
6. There are three parts to our salvation, past, present and future. We were saved when we first put our trust in Christ. We are being saved as God's Spirit works in us to make us more like Jesus. One day it will be finished when we are complete in Christ.
7. The most interesting and important portion of the two chapters is the ancient hymn we find in Philippians 2.
8. First, this hymn clearly proclaims the deity of Jesus Christ. He was God. Secondly, it teaches that Jesus Christ was fully man. He humbled Himself and became a man. This led to the erroneous teaching by the agnostics that Jesus did not actually become a man, but made himself look like one.
9. Another erroneous idea was that when He became a man He was no longer God. The New Testament refutes that teaching. He humbled Himself by taking our human nature with all of its limitations. Jesus made Himself less by adding human nature to Himself.
10. The third thing we see is the structure of the hymn. It has two verses. The first verse talks about Christ's voluntary humiliation by becoming a man and dying on the cross. The second verse talks about exaltation. "Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place..." This is a biblical pattern which fits Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Jesus, Paul and Peter.
11. The last thing we see about the Christ hymn is theology or doctrine. The purpose in the text is to help us learn a certain behavior. It is about humbling ourselves. If Jesus did it so should we.

1. Before coming to Christ, Paul was a Pharisee. He was a religious Jew, legalistic, righteous and faultless. Paul said that he now considered that as “rubbish.”
  
2. Before Paul was saved by grace he was counting on his parentage, ritual, religion and morality before God. These are the same things people rely on today.
  
3. Paul is attempting to counter the Judaizers who followed him. They said you have to be righteous first. Paul said that our righteousness comes from God through faith in Christ.
  
4. The verses that sum up the life of Paul are written here in Philippians 3:7-14. Paul was familiar with the Olympic games and Paul is thinking of his life as a race and straining to the finish line and to the prize awaiting him.
  
5. Much of the Book of Philippians is worth memorizing. Much of chapter 3 and 4, chapter 3:7-14 and chapter 4:4-8 and finally, chapter 4:13.
  
6. These two chapters give insight into humility and unity. There are some points we disagree on, but we should let God make it plain to us. Paul urges the church to resolve the personal issues which have separated Euodia and Syntheche.
  
7. The challenge to us as mature believers is to be able to say with Paul, “Follow me while I follow Christ.” Paul’s ministry and model produced leadership for the church.
  
8. Try to remember at least one significant thing about each chapter from Philippians.  
Chapter 1: “To me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” Paul is in prison. He does not know if he will be executed or released. He does not know what he wants. Chapter 2: The Christ hymn, humility and exaltation. Chapter 3: “I press on toward the mark of the high calling of Christ for my life,” my priorities. Chapter 4: Think on these things, “whatever is noble, true, right, think on these things.”

1. The books of Timothy, Titus, and Philemon are very different from the other writings of Paul. These books are all personal letters as opposed to being letters to whole churches. Titus and Timothy were “apprentices” to Paul. They are very instructive because they show how Paul talked to the men who were going to be the next leaders in the church. They are much briefer than the epistles to the churches.
2. Timothy, Philemon and Philippians were written while Paul was in prison waiting the decision of Caesar. The letter to Titus was written earlier to a worker Paul had left on the island of Cyprus to establish churches there. This little letter of Titus tells us how to be a leader and how to train others to be leaders.
3. Paul gives us some qualifications for leaders in the church. If you are going to be an elder or overseer (bishop), there are both qualifying and disqualifying issues. He must be blameless, a husband of one wife, a father of true believers, gentle, even-tempered, sober, gentle, honest, hospitable, lover of good, self-controlled, disciplined and holy. In addition to this, he must hold to and teach sound doctrine. His character must be Christ-like.
4. There are four things that combine to produce a person who is effective in ministry. First, a Christ-like character, second, the disciplines of a mature Christian life, third, the mastery of biblical and theological knowledge, and finally, an ability to use the specific skills associated with New Testament ministry. We tend to emphasize the last two, Paul believed the first two were the most important. Power in our lives flows from a Christ-like character.
5. Paul developed new leaders by mentoring them. He invited men to go with him and they watched him work. He showed them what to do and then Paul watched them work. He copied this from Jesus. Older men are called to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled and sound in faith, love and endurance. Older women are called to “train the younger in the ways of Christ.”
6. Timothy is encouraged by Paul to “set an example by doing what is good.” Then those who opposed him would have nothing bad to say about him.
7. Paul’s ministry was embroiled in controversy and opposition. It is important to note that the leaders will always be opposed by those who do not wish to be led. Paul advises Titus not to be sidetracked, but to stay focused.
8. If you have warned a divisive person for the second time, do not continue to deal with the same issues over and over. We are looking for Christ’s return. We should not get sidetracked but stay focused on the message.
9. Titus 2:13 is worth memorizing. Paul calls Jesus “the great God and our Savior.”
10. Each of Paul’s epistles teaches and emphasizes that salvation comes by grace through faith. In Titus this is found in chapter 3:5-8. These verses also help us understand the true meaning of Christian baptism. The outward sign of baptism points to an inward reality “the washing of rebirth”, which has already been administered by the Holy Spirit.
11. Titus 2:14 says that Jesus Christ “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” It is not enough to know that Christ has redeemed us; we must also know that He came to purify us and empower us to live to the glory of God.

1. Paul is in prison and calls himself an old man. Also in prison with him are Epaphroditus and John Mark. This is the same young man who once deserted Paul. Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance, and he was proven right. Paul has Mark with him and he is faithful to Paul. Mark is a powerful reminder that God gives second chances.
2. In the 1968 Olympics there was an accident in which an African runner was badly injured. He required medical attention and was in no shape to finish the race. However, he got up and tried. The marathon finished and the crowd was leaving when a lone runner was spotted limping along to finish the race. He finally finished the race and got a standing ovation. When asked why he continued to run in such terrible pain he replied, "My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start a race. They sent me to finish it." John Mark fell down early in the race, but by God's grace got up and finished the race. By God's grace we can finish our race too.
3. Aristarchus, Demas and Luke are also with Paul, along with Epaphras and Mark. Onesimus, a runaway slave from the household of Philemon, is the subject of Paul's letter.
4. Somehow Onesimus found Paul. Paul had stayed in Philemon's house before. We do not know how Onesimus found Paul. It is possible that in order to escape, Onesimus had stolen from his master. Or it is possible, the amount due Philemon is price of the labor which he had been denied, or the price to redeem Onesimus. Paul offers to pay Philemon what is due.
5. Onesimus has become a Christian as a result of his encounter with Paul. Although Paul would like to keep him with him, it is not possible. Onesimus must return to Philemon and ask for forgiveness and make restitution. While we might rationalize what Onesimus did, we cannot. The Gospel is a gospel of reconciliation. Because we have been reconciled to God through the death of Christ, we must be reconciled to men.
6. Onesimus did what Paul told him to do. We know that because we have this letter which Onesimus took to Philemon. We also know from the surviving letters of the first century Christians that one of the greatest leaders of the early church was a bishop named Onesimus.
7. Philemon was a Christian man in whose home Paul had stayed. Philemon was the host and perhaps the leader of a church that met in his home. Paul sends greetings to Apphia, who was probably Philemon's wife and also to Archippus. Paul called Archippus his "fellow soldier."
8. Paul tells Philemon to accept Onesimus back as a brother in Christ, not as a runaway slave. Christianity completely alters the social structure because all people are on an equal footing before God. Sin is a great leveler, but so is grace.
9. Paul says to Philemon to free the slave because it is the right thing to do. Apparently Philemon did what Paul asked, though it could not have made him very popular with other slaveholders.
10. We do not know why the New Testament does not condemn the practice of slavery and demand its abolition. If we truly understand the New Testament we must conclude that before God, and therefore before one another, all people are equal.
11. Philemon was part of a house church, a small group that met together regularly to worship God, to learn His Word and encourage one another. That was how it was in the first century church. It is still in the context of small fellowship groups that some of the most effective work of the kingdom is done.