

Philippians

South Tulsa Baptist Church

DISCIPLESHIP
Groups

“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 for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”

~ Philippians 1:9-11



A digital book can be found on our website:
southtulsa.org/discipleship-groups

Philippians

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<i>(The BibleProject is the author and owner of the illustration. Learn more about BibleProject at www.bibleproject.com.)</i>	

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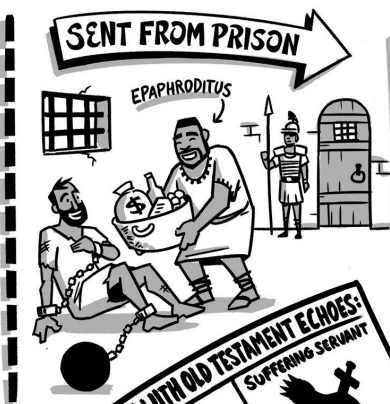
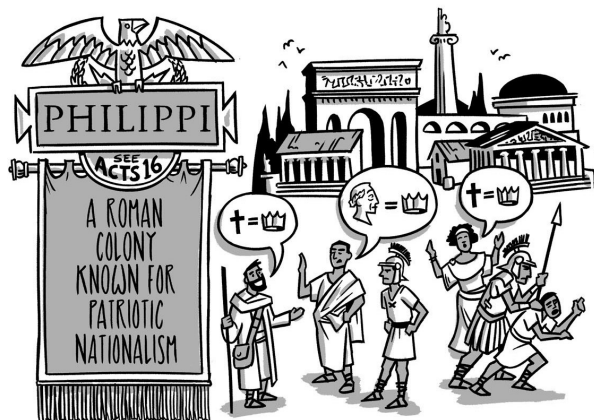
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PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

1:1-11 OPENING PRAYER



1:12-26 PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT



RELEASE

START MORE JESUS COMMUNITIES

PARTICIPATING IN THE STORY OF JESUS

EXECUTION

"FOR ME, LIFE IS THE MESSIAH, AND SO DYING WOULD BE A GAIN." (1:21)

PRESENCE WITH JESUS GREAT FOR PAUL...

OR

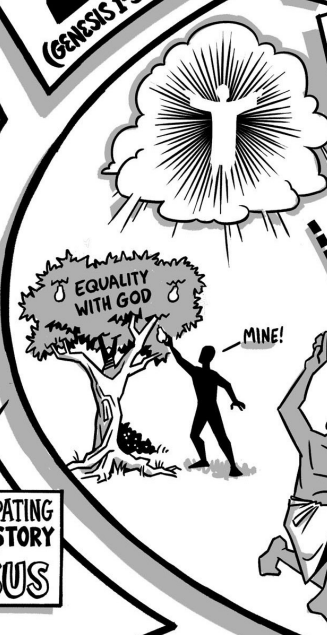
BETTER FOR OTHERS

1:27-2:18 FOLLOWING JESUS' EXAMPLE

"YOUR LIFE AS CITIZENS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE MESSIAH." (1:27)



RICH WITH OLD TESTAMENT ECHOES:
ADAM (GENESIS 1-3)
SUFFERING SERVANT (ISAIAH 40-55)



ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE NATURE OF GOD, HE DID NOT REGARD HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD AS A THING TO BE EXPLOITED; RATHER, HE EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING UP THE NATURE OF A SERVANT: HE WAS BORN AS A HUMAN & RECOGNIZED AS A HUMAN; HE HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS.

A EXPRESSES PAUL'S CONVICTION OF WHO JESUS IS...

19-24 TIMOTHY



2:19-30

LETTER TO THE COPIANS

MESSIAH POEM

THEREFORE, GOD HAS HIGHLY EXALTED HIM,
AND GIVEN HIM THE NAME
WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME,
SO THAT AT THE NAME OF JESUS
EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, IN HEAVEN,
ON EARTH, OR UNDER THE EARTH,
AND EVERY TONGUE WILL CONFESS:

JESUS the MESSIAH
is LORD! To the GLORY
of GOD the FATHER!

B
...OFFERS AN
EXAMPLE
to follow

TWO EXAMPLES

HE CAME CLOSE TO DEATH TO
SERVE THE MESSIAH."

v25-30

EPAPHRODITUS

...HE'S
OKAY!

QUOTING ISAIAH 45:23
PAUL'S POINT:
the One True God
consists of
GOD the FATHER
& the LORD JESUS

A UNIQUE WINDOW INTO PAUL'S HEART & MIND

- HE SAW HIS LIFE AS A REENACTMENT OF JESUS' STORY
- HIS AWARENESS OF JESUS' LOVE & PRESENCE GAVE HIM HOPE & HUMILITY
- KNOWING JESUS IS DEEPLY PERSONAL & TRANSFORMATIVE

4:10-23

CLOSING THANKS



IN NEED & PROSPERITY,
IN POVERTY & PLENTY,
I'VE LEARNED THE SECRET OF
CONTENTMENT: SIMPLE
DEPENDENCE ON THE ONE
WHO STRENGTHENS ME.
(4:12-13)



4:2-9

CHALLENGE TO LIVE THE EXAMPLE

EVODIA &
SYNTICHE

"I PLEAD WITH YOU TO BE
UNIFIED IN THE LORD." (4:2)



"MAKE YOUR NEEDS
KNOWN TO THE
GOD OF PEACE
WHO WILL GUARD
YOUR HEARTS &
MINDS." (4:6-7)



3:1-4:1

PAUL'S EXAMPLE



"I REGARD IT ALL AS
FILTH
IN COMPARISON TO
KNOWING THE MESSIAH."
(3:8-10)



"OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN
& WE'RE AWAITING OUR ROYAL SAVIOR
TO COME FROM THERE."
(3:20)



created by the Bible Project

Lectio Divina

This discipleship curriculum is patterned after the monastic practice of *Lectio Divina*. *Lectio Divina*, meaning “Sacred Reading,” has been a long-practiced rhythm that Christians have used to study, reflect, and be renewed by God’s Word. The purpose of *Lectio Divina* is to slow us down and be attentive to what God is saying to us through the Scriptures. We are asking God to speak to us and to transform us as we engage with the Word. The goal for our discipleship groups, as well as *Lectio Divina*, is not simply to gain information but to have our hearts and minds changed by encountering the living God through reading Scripture, praying, and being in fellowship with others seeking to follow Jesus. Our prayer is that this process will bring you into a deeper and abiding relationship with Jesus.

There are four steps in the process of practicing *Lectio Divina*.

Before beginning, take a moment to prepare and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you begin to read the passage. Ask the Lord to settle your heart and your mind for this time of abiding in His presence.

1. **Lectio: “Read”** — *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”* (Psalm 119:105).
 - Read the Scripture several times and be attentive to detail.
 - Note verses or phrases that stand out to you.
 - Work to understand meaning and background.
2. **Meditatio: “Meditate”** — *“I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways”* (Psalm 119:15).
 - Think about how the Scripture connects to your life.
 - Reflect on a word or phrase.
 - Try imagining yourself sitting in the audience and hearing the letter read for the first time. How do these words speak to you?
3. **Oratio: “Pray”** — *“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23-24).
 - Pray to God about the passage.
 - Pray that the passage may change your heart and mind.
 - Thank God for His Word and ask Him to lead you to a deeper understanding.
 - Pray about the things that challenge you or the things to which you need to be obedient.
4. **Contemplatio: “Contemplate”** — *“He says, ‘Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth’”* (Psalm 46:10).
 - Take some time to be silent and listen to God’s voice or how He may be leading you.
 - Be still.
 - Take note of what God is teaching you in the passage and this time of reflection.

Week 1

The Pure Gospel Philippians 1:1-11

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:1-2 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEDITATE

- Pray once again and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: The late pastor R.C. Sproul told the story of a new believer in Christ who was attempting to read the Bible for the first time. Having learned that much of the New Testament is made up of letters written from the Apostles to the first Christians, the man "had his assistant type out the epistles of the New Testament verbatim, one at a time, and then had them sent through the mail to himself, as if he were the one addressed in each epistle...he read them as if each had been written just for him."

The letter of Philippians was written in a particular time and place—from a real person (the Apostle Paul) to real people (the church at Philippi). Though the Holy Spirit led Paul to write this letter within his own context, the same Holy Spirit uses this book of the Bible to speak to us today, so that we might hear from the Lord about how to live a life that is pleasing to Him and to be part of His gospel work in our own time and place.

Reflection Questions:

- If God were to send a letter directly to you at this moment in time in your life, what are some things you would hope He would address?

- Do you sense anything specific that God is trying to teach you through His Word?

- What ways are you being challenged, convicted, or encouraged?

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:3-6 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 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.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: The Bible often ties together 'remembering' and 'thankfulness.' God challenges His people to remember His commands, to take note of His work in our lives, to be thankful in the process. The Apostle Paul remembers his brothers and sisters in Christ with thankfulness, and

describes their Christian service together as a "fellowship," or "partnership in the gospel."

The New Testament word used for this idea of 'partnership,' *koinōnia*, means a shared love and commitment between people. The same word was used commonly in the ancient world for marriage, family, friendship, business partnership, common ownership of property, citizenship, and membership in religious organizations. God's people thrive when there is healthy *koinōnia* with one another through our shared commitment to follow Jesus and glorify God through our lives. These kinds of relationships will stand the test of time, verse 6 says, not because of anything that comes from our own strength but rather because He who started this good work in us is still at work – and He will carry it on to completion until the day Christ returns to the earth.

Reflection Questions:

Our goal for Day 2 is to go deeper with this Scripture by reading another part of Scripture with similar teaching. Read the passage below and consider the questions that follow.

Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...

- What key words or ideas do you see in Philippians 1 and Colossians 1 that represent consistent characteristics of a Christlike life and attitudes that are pleasing to God?
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- Do you sense anything specific that God is trying to teach you through His Word?

- What ways are you being challenged, convicted, or encouraged?

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:7-11 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:7-11 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. 8 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, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Did you notice in verse 7 that the Apostle Paul gives us a clue as to location at the time of writing this letter to the church at Philippi? Paul describes himself as being “in chains,” which is what he was literally experiencing while being imprisoned at Rome around AD 61 when writing this letter.

As he sat in chains because of the gospel message of Christ, Paul prayed regularly that the believers in Philippi display more love and grow deeper in their knowledge and insight about the Lord. Growing in God's love and knowledge means more than just gaining information, it means abiding in Christ so that the fruit of His righteousness might be displayed in our lives for the glory and praise of God, not for ourselves. As biblical scholar D.A. Carson writes, “A person might memorize Scripture, or teach Sunday School, or even earn a degree in theology...but that is not the same as growing in the knowledge of God. Such growth requires repentance and demands an increase in our love—our love for God and our love for others.”

Reflection Questions:

- What are you learning about God?

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-

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D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 1

OPEN WITH PRAYER

QUESTIONS FOR ALL TO ANSWER

- Tell us about yourself and your family.
- What's one unique thing about you that we should know?
- What is one area of your life in which you want to grow spiritually?

TALK ABOUT YOUR WEEK

- How are things with your soul this week? Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ ALOUD THE SCRIPTURES FROM THIS WEEK

Philippians 1:1-11 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 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.

7 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. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be one of God's saints? (A person who is holy and set apart for God. A person who is different and stands out because of what Christ has done in them.)
2. What does it look like to be fully engaged in the *koinōnia* of the Body of Christ – the fellowship and partnership in the gospel?
3. What does it mean that God is carrying on His good work in us until completion?

Application Questions

1. How often do you pray AND give thanks?
2. Do you consider the needs of your brothers and sisters as important as your own, are you gaining strength from the fellowship of the body, or are you going it alone?
3. Are you growing in love AND knowledge; and are you growing in knowledge AND love?

IF TIME PERMITS, WALK THROUGH THE QUESTIONS FROM DAY 3 AGAIN, WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE.

- What are you learning about God?
- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?
- What are you learning about being part of Christ's Church?
- What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?
- What do you need to do in response to God's Word?

Prayer Requests

Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week 2

A Life Worthy of the Gospel Philippians 1:12-30

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:12-20 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:12-20 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. 15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision

of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: How is it that the Apostle Paul can look at the things that have happened to him and can say, "that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel (1:12)?" He writes to the Philippians while he is a prisoner bound in chains. Paul has clearly surrendered all aspects of his life to Christ. So, when suffering comes along, it does not keep him down. Instead, Paul sees such times as opportunities for Christ to reveal His strength through our weaknesses. Paul did not see his prison guards as oppressors, but as lost individuals in need of the Gospel.

Our times of suffering are met by the Lord's provision. Paul used his time of suffering to encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ. The Lord's strength on display in Paul encouraged them to persevere. Today, let our prayer be that the Lord would teach us to take on this understanding of our trials and our suffering. What a beautiful thing it is that Jesus does not allow our pain to go to waste. Be reminded of

this hope in Romans 14:8 – “If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.” As disciples of Jesus, there is never a moment when we do not belong to the Lord.

Reflection Questions:

- What difficult things in your life has God used for the Gospel?

- How does the truth that you belong to Jesus now and in eternity shape the way you live your life?

- What is God trying to teach you through His Word?

- What do you need to believe, do, or change after reading this passage?

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:21-26 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:21-26 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God’s Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: In a sermon titled “Free Grace,” John Wesley, an eighteenth-century Anglican priest and theologian, described the comfort believers can have through the assurance of faith given to us by the Holy Spirit: “That assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear. It excludes all kind of doubt and fear concerning their further perseverance; though it is not properly an assurance of what is future, but of what now is.” Like Philippians 1,

Wesley is speaking of a present reality of living in and for Christ, not only a hope we long for in the future.

In Philippians 1:21, Scripture states, “For to me, to live is Christ...” Our current life is defined by our relationship with the Lord and the in-dwelling of His Holy Spirit. Because we presently live in Christ, He has a direct impact on who we are and who we are becoming. This verse builds on the idea in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” In this co-crucifixion with Christ, we are conforming to be more like Christ.

Reflection Questions: Our goal for Day 2 is to go deeper with this Scripture by reading another part of Scripture with similar teaching. Read the passage below and consider the questions that follow.

Galatians 2:19-21 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!

- What key words or ideas do you see in Philippians 1:21-26 and Galatians 2:19-21 that show us what it means to live our lives for Christ?

- What does the present reality of following after Jesus look like?

- How can you follow Jesus daily?
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-

- What do you need to believe, do, or change after reading these passages?
-
-
-

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 1:27-30 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 1:27-30 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Reflection Questions:

- What are practical ways you can follow after Christ?

- What are you learning about God?

- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?

- What are you learning about being part of Christ's Church?

- What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?

- What do you need to do in response to God's Word?

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: What is worthy of the Gospel?

The only true answer is Jesus Himself. Conducting ourselves as Christ would is the challenge Philipians presents to us as its readers. How are we to achieve such a command? The answer, though simple, requires all that we are. When Jesus called His disciples, He invited them to live with Him and witness what it meant to love God with all that they are and to love their neighbor as themselves. Lois Tverberg, an author and researcher on the Jewish background of Christianity, explains that a disciple's goal in following a rabbi was to "cover yourself in his dust." This meant that a disciple was changed by their Rabbi, their teacher, as they followed close behind and imitated him. As disciples of Christ, we follow Him; we are covered in His dust, and our hearts are shaped and molded after our Lord.

It is only by following closely after Christ that we can conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. The text indicates that this is not done alone. In verse 27, it says that we are "*striving together as one for the faith of the Gospel.*" These discipleship groups are vital to our lives because we are to strive together as brothers and sisters in Christ. In the body of Christ, we do not strive alone, we do not struggle alone, and we do not suffer alone. Learn with one another and encourage one another to walk in the dust of Jesus!

D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 2

OPEN WITH PRAYER

TALK ABOUT YOUR WEEK

- How are things with your soul this week?
Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ ALOUD THE SCRIPTURES FROM THIS WEEK

Reading 1: Philippians 1:12-14 *Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.*

Discussion Questions

1. What difficult things in your life has God used for the Gospel?

Reading 2: Philippians 1:15-26 *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Discussion Questions

2. How does the truth that you belong to Jesus now and in eternity shape the way you live your life?
3. What does Paul mean by "For me, to live is Christ"?

Reading 3: Philippians 1:27-30 *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

Application Questions

- 1. How can you follow Jesus daily?
- 2. What is one practical way you can follow after Christ?
- 3. How can we grow as a church community that conducts ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel?

WALK THROUGH THE QUESTIONS FROM DAY 3 AGAIN, WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE.

- What are you learning about God?
- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?
- What are you learning about being part of Christ's Church?
- What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?
- What do you need to do in response to God's Word?

Prayer Requests

Notes

Week 3

A Life Shaped by Christ Philippians 2

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 2:1-11 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 2:1-11 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

MEDITATE

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your life reflects the humility of Christ and where you are still putting yourself first.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Unity in the Church begins when we take on the mindset of Christ. The Philippians are called to pursue unity by putting aside selfish ambition and pride and considering others more important than themselves. This isn't merely about getting along. Those who have experienced the love and grace of Christ are called to extend that same love to one another.

The Scripture then points to Jesus who had every right to glory, yet He willingly humbled Himself, became a servant, and gave Himself for others. His humility is both our example and our motivation. As we see Christ more clearly, our focus shifts from ourselves to others. Instead of asking, "What do I want?" We can begin asking, "How can I serve?" Instead of protecting our preferences, we can pursue what strengthens the body of Christ. As we imitate the humility of Jesus, we become a people who are increasingly unified around Him.

Reflection Questions:

- What ways are you challenged, convicted, or encouraged by this passage?

- What are you learning about being part of Christ's Church?

- What opinions, attitudes, or preferences might you need to surrender for the sake of unity?

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond in obedience.

READ

Read Philippians 2:12-18 more than once. Notice what Paul commands believers to do and what he says God is doing.

Philippians 2:12-18 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to

the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

MEDITATE

Pay particular attention to verses 12-13. What is our responsibility? What is God's responsibility?

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Today we move from the example of Christ to the believer's response. The command to “work out” our salvation does not mean that we earn salvation by our effort. Philippians has already made clear that salvation is found in Christ. Instead, God's Word is calling believers to live out the reality of the salvation He has already given them. Notice verse 13: we work, but God is the one working in us. We are not passively waiting for God to change us while we make no effort. At the same time, we are not left to manufacture spiritual growth through our own effort. God changes our desires, gives us strength to obey, and works through our surrender.

Applying the Scripture to everyday life, believers are called to “do everything without grumbling or arguing.” That may sound like a small command, but it exposes the condition of our hearts. Complaining reveals that we believe our circumstances, preferences, or comfort level should be different. As believers, we are called to live as lights in a dark world by being noticeably different in the ways we respond to life. Our obedience matters because our lives should point others toward Christ.

Reflection Questions:

- What ways are you challenged, convicted, or encouraged by this passage?

- Where are you tempted to be passive about your spiritual growth?

- Where could choosing gratitude instead of grumbling make your faith visible this week?

- What is one area where you know God is asking you to obey?

Go Deeper: Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and Titus 3:4.

Ephesians 2:8-10 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Titus 3:4 *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,*

- How do these passages help you understand Philippians 2:12?

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you to understand His word and see what faithfulness looks like in everyday life.

READ

Read Philippians 2:19-30 more than once. Write down anything that stands out about Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Philippians 2:19-30 *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.*

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost

died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Reflection Questions:

- In what ways are you challenged, convicted, or encouraged by this passage?

- Why do you think Paul highlights the character of Timothy and Epaphroditus rather than their accomplishments?

- Who is one person you could intentionally notice, encourage, or serve this week?

- What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?

- Do you sense anything specific that God is trying to teach you through His Word?

MEDITATE

Ask God what these ordinary men can teach you about following Jesus faithfully.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: After describing Jesus' humility, Paul introduces us to Timothy and Epaphroditus, two ordinary men who were faithful. Verse 21 says, *"For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ."* But Timothy and Epaphroditus lived differently. Timothy genuinely cared for others, and Epaphroditus was willing to risk his life serving Christ. Their lives show us what it looks like to live a Christlike life, not seeking our own interests, but looking for ways to love and serve others.

Our culture tells us to protect our time, promote ourselves, and focus on our own lives. But following Jesus calls us to look up and look around. Who needs to be noticed? Who needs someone to listen, encourage, or just show up? God often uses ordinary people who are willing to be faithful, and He may want to use you to make a difference in someone's life today. ...

D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 3

OPEN WITH PRAYER

TALK ABOUT YOUR WEEK

- How are things with your soul this week?
Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ ALOUD THE SCRIPTURES FROM THIS WEEK

Reading 1: Philippians 2:1-11 *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ordinary ways pride shows up in our lives?
2. What aspect of Jesus' humility in Philippians 2:5-8 challenges you the most?

Reading 2: Philippians 2:12-18 *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Discussion Questions

3. What does it mean to “work out” your salvation without trying to earn it?

Reading 3: Philippians 2:19-30 *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.*

24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself
will come soon.

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Prayer Requests

[illegible]

Discussion Questions

4. Share about a time when someone's humility or sacrificial love impacted you.

Application Questions

1. Where might God be asking you to surrender your need to be right, noticed, or in control?
2. What would faithfulness look like for you in this season?
3. What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?
4. What do you need to do in response to God's Word?

CLOSE BY PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

Week 4

Life in Christ is All that Matters Philippians 3:1–14

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:1-3 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 3:1-3 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh...

MEDITATE

Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: The Scriptures reveal an idea in verse 1 that requires us to dig deeper. As we study God's Word, it is helpful to ask clarifying questions. We read in Philippians where Paul says he does not mind writing the "same things" again because they serve as a safeguard. This raises the question: what are these "same things"? There is some debate, but it seems likely Paul is referring to his exhortation to "rejoice in the Lord." Since he emphasizes rejoicing three times throughout Philippians, it appears to be a recurring theme. Rejoicing in Christ is a safeguard because our joy is rooted in Him, not in our circumstances. As Christians, we have a firm foundation in Christ that should enable us to rejoice regardless of life's difficulties.

Zack Hudson remembers a time in college when he struggled with anxiety and depression. Fear took hold of his mind, and he became convinced he would never have another "good" day on earth. In that moment, the Lord broke through and led him to think about heaven and eternity with Christ. It was possible that all his days forward would not be okay, but that would not be forever. Zack says, "My best days truly were ahead of me as I focused on Christ and eternity with Him in heaven. I had a reason to rejoice, even though I did not physically feel like rejoicing!"

The description of rejoicing as a safeguard also prepares the reader for the warning in verse 2. The Philippians were facing people who placed confidence in keeping the Jewish law as a means of righteousness. They needed the reminder that salvation is not found in human effort, or religious observance, but in Christ alone. Therefore, our confidence and boasting should never rest in our own obedience but in Christ and the saving work He has accomplished on our behalf.

Reflection Questions:

- What does it mean to "Rejoice in the Lord"?

- What safeguards do you have set up in your life that keep you from trouble?

- In what ways do you put too much confidence in your own strengths and abilities?

faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:4-11 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 3:4-11 ... though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Our previous devotional focused on the importance of placing our confidence in Christ for salvation rather than in our own works. The Scriptures reveal that Paul had a reason to boast in human accomplishments. He had an impressive religious resume and more to give up than most in order to follow Christ.

A rabbi once explained that some people in his congregation did not believe in God but still identified as Jewish because of their family heritage and cultural identity. Paul did not merely surrender his position and education; in many ways, he was turning away from the traditions and identity that had shaped his entire life. Yet in verse 7, he declares that whatever had once been a gain to him, he now considered a loss because of Christ. His value system no longer centered on earthly accomplishments but on knowing Jesus.

Paul goes even further by calling those former achievements garbage. That word leaves no room for hesitation. When we intentionally throw some-

thing away, we have no plans to retrieve it because it no longer has value. In the same way, Paul permanently discarded his former source of confidence, finding everything he truly needed in Christ.

Reflection Questions: Our goal for Day 2 is to go deeper with this Scripture by reading another part of Scripture with similar teaching. Read the passage below and consider the questions that follow.

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Considering Philippians 3:4–11 and Galatians 1:13–14, read Paul’s testimony in Acts 9:1–19.

- What happened to Paul to cause such a change?

- What events/circumstances have caused shifts in how you live your life?

- Is there anything in your life that is competing with your desire to follow after Jesus?

- Is there something you’re confident in—your abilities, accomplishments, reputation, or experience—that God may be asking you to surrender to Him?

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:12-14 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: To better understand verse 12, we need to look back at verses 9–10. God's Word shows us that Paul expresses his deepest desire: not only to know Christ, but also to know the power of His resurrection and to share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death. Paul recognizes that he has not yet fully experienced all that God has for him. There is still room to grow. There is great clarity in his direction. He knows where he wants to go as a follower of Jesus, and he refuses to become complacent. Instead, he presses on toward the goal.

In verse 13, we see that Paul has not yet taken hold of it completely, but he continues pursuing Christ with determination. He also invites other believers to follow his example, understanding that our lives influence those around us. This passage gives us two actions that are important in the life of every believer: forgetting and moving forward. We need to leave our past behind, whether that means our failures and mistakes, old ways of doing things, or even unhealthy relationships. Instead of dwelling on what is behind, we must continue moving forward, pursuing Christ and following His ways.

Imagine trying to drive your car forward while spending too much time looking in the rear-view mirror. Yes, checking our mirrors is important, but gazing too long in them can quickly lead us into trouble or slow us down. It is hard to move forward when our eyes are fixed on what is behind us.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you have someone who helps you in your relationship with Christ?

- Are there relationships in your life that pull you away from Christ and toward the world?

- What might God be asking of you considering these relationships?

- Have you thought about your own spiritual goals?

- What spiritual goals could you come up with for your family?

- What spiritual goals would you like to consider for yourself personally?

D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 4

OPEN WITH PRAYER

TALK ABOUT YOUR WEEK

- How are things with your soul this week?
Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ ALOUD THE SCRIPTURES FROM THIS WEEK

Reading 1: Philippians 3:1-11 *Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through

faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Discussion Questions

1. God's Word shows us that Paul gave up everything he once trusted in so that he could gain Christ (verses 4–9). What are some things people today are tempted to place their confidence in instead of Christ, and do you find yourself relying on any of them?
2. In verses 10–11, Paul says his greatest desire is “to know Christ”—even if that means sharing in His sufferings. What do you think it practically looks like to know Christ more deeply, and how can suffering or hardship become part of that process?

Reading 2: Philippians 3:12-14 *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Discussion Questions

3. Paul admits in verse 12 that he has not already “obtained all this” or “already arrived,” yet he continues pursuing Christ. How does God's Word challenge the way we think about spiritual maturity, and what is one area where you sense God calling you to keep growing?

Application Questions

1. This chapter begins with the command to “rejoice in the Lord.” In what ways have you found rejoicing in the Lord to be helpful in your daily life?
2. Philippians presents rejoicing in the Lord as a safeguard for believers. What safeguards have you put in place to protect yourself from both physical and spiritual dangers?
3. Paul’s encounter with Jesus completely changed the direction of his life. What experiences or life events have had the greatest impact on who you are today? How have you allowed those experiences—whether positive or negative—to draw you closer to Christ?

Walk through the questions from Day 3 again, with the opportunity for participants to share.

- What are you learning about God?
- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?
- What are you learning about being part of Christ's Church?
- What needs to grow or even change about what you believe?
- What do you need to do in response to God's Word?

Prayer Requests

[illegible]

Week 5

Our True Citizenship Philippians 3:15-21

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

- Start in silence. Today, examine yourself and where you are spiritually and emotionally. Begin to quiet your mind. Start your prayer with words of thanksgiving, then pray the instructions Eli gave to Samuel in 1 Samuel 3, “*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*” Do your part: listen.
- Pray against the busyness of the day and ask the Lord to allow you to be present as you begin Day 1.
- Pray to God about the Scripture. Ask the Lord to lead you in His understanding above your own.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:15-16 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make note of verses or phrases that stand out to you.
- Perhaps go back and read starting with Philippians 3:1.

Philippians 3:15-16 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

MEDITATE

- Meditate on what you just read. Do any parts of these verses stand out to you immediately?
- Pray that the Lord would make clear those things that align with His will. *Examples: What is the direction of my life? Where do you want me right now?*
- Pray the Holy Spirit will lead you to live more like Christ in light of the reading.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: These verses begin with an all-call. The words are not targeted at an exclusive group. You are just as much a part of this call as were those Christians 2,000 years ago. This “view of things” is what Paul previously discussed in verses 12-14. He writes in those verses that he has not yet gained perfection but is striving for the “goal for the prize of the upward call of God,” still leaving the past behind. For those who are mature, and even for those who are not, God will reveal this way of seeing things to them in His perfect timing.

However, the Lord does not allow us to use excuses for things we do not know to cover for the things we do know. If we know something is the Lord’s will, we must strive continually for it! We are not called to be a stagnant people. God has given unique gifts and callings to each of us. As 1 Peter 4:10 states, “*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.*” As we learn more from God through prayer and the Spirit, let us continue to serve one another, and do the next right thing.

Reflection Questions:

- Are you waiting on the Lord to reveal the next right thing? If so, is there anything that could be hindering you from receiving those instructions from the Lord? Take time to pray.
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- Think about what you have already attained in your walk with Christ. Do you find yourself striving even more for those things, or standing still?

- What ways are you being challenged, convicted, or encouraged when reading these verses?

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

- Start in silence. Today, examine yourself and where you are spiritually and emotionally. Begin to pray. Pray as you did yesterday, starting with words of thanksgiving. Finally, echo these words once more from 1 Samuel 3, “*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*” Do your part: listen.
- Pray against the busyness of the day and ask the Lord to allow you to be present as you begin Day 2.
- Pray to God about the Scripture. Ask the Lord to lead you in His understanding above your own.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:17-19 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 3:17-19 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

MEDITATE

- Thank the Lord for adopting you as one of His children (1 John 3:1). He loves you, child of God! Continue in this thankfulness as you meditate.
- Meditate on what you just read. Do any parts of these verses stand out to you immediately?

- Pray the Holy Spirit will lead you to live more like Christ in light of the reading.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: It is easy to see Paul as having a big ego when writing this. However, in the previous verses, it was clear that he recognized his own imperfections and sinful nature. His desire for the Church was that each person would strive for Jesus, as his life had modeled. Because Christians share the same Spirit and baptism, we set our minds on the things that come from above. Therefore, beware, saint! Those who have their minds set on things below will often try to take us off course and distract us from heavenly things. Today, if you feel trapped in worry and anxiety, those fears are always connected to things of this world. May we look to things that come from the Kingdom of God, and watch sin flee from us!

Reflection Questions:

- What are ways you can begin to change your mind to focus on things above and not worldly things?

- What ways are you being challenged, convicted, or encouraged when reading these verses?

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

- Start in silence. Today, examine yourself and where you are spiritually and emotionally. Begin to quiet your mind. Begin to pray. Pray as you did yesterday, starting with words of thanksgiving. Finally, echo these words once more from 1 Samuel 3, “*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*” Do your part: listen.
- Pray against the busyness of the day and ask the Lord to allow you to be present as you begin Day 3.
- Pray to God about the Scripture. Ask the Lord to lead you in His understanding above your own.

READ

- Read Philippians 3:20-21 more than once and try to be attentive to details.
- Make notes about verses or phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

MEDITATE

- Meditate on what you just read. Does any part of these verses stand out to you immediately?

- If there are any areas where you lack wisdom, or still find something in these verses that may confuse you, pray to God. The Lord is kind and He loves to give us His wisdom from above (James 1:5).
- Pray the Holy Spirit will lead you to live more like Christ in light of the reading.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Another piece of good news can be found in verse 20 – our citizenship is in heaven! This means that we are not actually of this world. Wherever we go in this world, we are in some ways like foreigners and strangers. Because many in Philippi were proud Roman citizens, this idea might have come as a shock to them. So Paul further explained—just as those in the Empire might anticipate and prepare for a visit from a high Roman authority, even more so should we as believers eagerly await the arrival of our True King, Jesus Christ.

To “eagerly await” our Savior means an intense waiting that is active, not passive. This is the kind of waiting that comes during a long separation. Think about the last time you were separated from a loved one or friend. Do you remember how eager you were to see them, perhaps even counting down the days? We must do the same for Christ! Scripture promises that one day Christ will transform us by

His perfect and mighty power to be like Him and share in His glory. What a good God we serve that He wants to live with us, even though we so often fall short!

Reflection Questions:

- Are you passive in your waiting for the Lord, or are you actively seeking His Kingdom?

- When Christ returns, will He find you hard at work?

Go Deeper: Those who have learned to follow Christ most closely have a few essential habits that are part of their daily lives. One is, upon rising each morning, to put on the armor of God. To “put on” can include a physical action that brings to mind what the Lord provides to help us face each day including: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-17). Put these on every morning! You would never intentionally leave the house without your keys, wallet, or phone; so why would you leave without the armor of God that protects you from the Enemy’s schemes?

In addition to putting on the armor, Scripture also commands us to put off our selfish desires. To accept the call of Christ is to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him—may we do so with excellence! These habits help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus instead of ourselves or our circumstances. You, saint, are an image-bearer of the living God. You have a Heavenly Father who wants to know you and spend time with you, and who is always near. What a joy it is to follow Jesus!

Reflection Questions:

If you have not yet been journaling the wisdom you’ve been receiving from the Lord, now is a good time to start with the following questions.

- What are you learning about God?

- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?

- What are you learning about the Church?

- What do you need to believe?

- What do you need to do?

D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 5

OPEN WITH PRAYER

QUESTIONS FOR ALL TO ANSWER

- How is your family doing this week?
(If applicable, marriage, children, etc.)
- What is a praise you have from this week?
- What is an area of your life that still needs spiritual growth?

CHECK-IN

- How are things with your soul this week?
Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

READ ALOUD TOGETHER

Philippians 3:15-21 All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

17 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

OPEN DISCUSSION

This is the time for any questions about the Scripture that came to you during the week, or other comments you may have from your days of personal devotion.

Discussion Questions

1. Paul talks about following the example of his own walk with Christ. Is there someone in your life who has a faithful walk with Christ that you could imitate?
2. Are you living in a way that others could easily imitate your walk with Christ?
3. Are there “enemies of the cross of Christ” you encounter daily? Do you find it easy or hard to pray for them?
4. Do you find your mind set on the things of this world, or on things above? Do you find it easier to set your mind on things above in low times, or in times that are happier?

Application Questions

1. What areas in your life do you need to seek further maturity according to God's Word?
2. How can you work on setting your mind on things that are above, and not on worldly things?
3. What do you need to surrender to live in right standing as a citizen of God's Kingdom?

Walk through the questions from Day 3 again, with the opportunity for participants to share.

- What are you learning about God?
- What are you learning about who God has called you to be?
- What are you learning about the Church?
- What do you need to believe?
- What do you need to do?

Prayer Requests

Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week 6

Christlikeness in Hearts, Thoughts, and Actions Philippians 4

PERSONAL READING AND REFLECTION

DAY 1 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

- Read Philippians 4:1-7 multiple times. Notice the words used to encourage the church at Philippi. Take note of the words and phrases that stand out to you.

Philippians 4:1-7 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Chapter 4 opens with Paul expressing his love for and longing to be with the church at Philippi. He knows that in his present situation in prison, he cannot be with them. His first encouragement is for them to “stand firm in the Lord.” He then goes on to explain how they are to stand firm, but in a way that might surprise us.

First, specific members of the church are encouraged to agree and others to help them agree. Quarreling within the body of Christ is not a desirable attribute! It pushes people apart. Some may have been part of a difficult church situation or meeting. We should strive to be unified in Christ, especially in the essentials of our faith. We learn here that Christian unity is an important part of standing firm. Second, standing firm also has to do with rejoicing in the Lord, no matter the circumstances. As we've seen, Paul was writing from prison. He gives the instruction to rejoice in every chapter of Philippians, repeating it many times so the Church would take it to heart. This same passage also says not to be anxious. In a very real way, a heart that rejoices in the Lord is one that is not constantly worried. Instead, we are to pray and seek God for our needs and concerns, and He will give us His peace.

Standing firm has to do with the condition of our hearts. We should care enough to promote Christian unity. Our hearts should rejoice in the Lord, even through difficult circumstances in a way that is not anxious, but prayerful. We should ask the Lord to help us be more Christlike and stand firm.

Reflection Questions:

- What are ways that you can promote Christian unity?

- How can rejoicing drive away anxiety?

- What are other ways in which you can stand firm?

- Are you becoming more Christlike in your heart?

DAY 2 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

Read Philippians 4:8-9 multiple times.
Notice the good things Scripture instructs us to think about.

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: It's as true for us as it was for the Philippians; we must be careful with the things that fill our minds. There are so many distractions in our world today, so many things that can fill our minds and consume our time. This passage of Scripture helps us understand as Christians how we should think and how we should live.

Let's set our minds on what is true, the objective truth revealed in God's Word. Let's set our minds on what is noble, honorable, and worthy. Let's set our minds on what is right according to God's standards. Let's set our minds on what is pure, moral, and undefiled. Let's think on what is lovely, gracious, and beautiful. Let's think on what is admirable and see

Christlike qualities in others. Let's think on what is excellent and praiseworthy, knowing that Jesus is the One worthy to receive our life's devotion. It is so easy for our minds to be filled with the things of the world – whether social media, politics, technology, entertainment, or anything else. Sometimes even good things can rise to a prominence that is unhealthy for our spiritual lives.

Verse 9 goes on to encourage the Church not only to think about the good things of God, but to also put them into practice. Paul uses his own teaching and example as an illustration of discipleship. *“What you have learned, received, heard, or seen in me, do these things.”* Pray: Lord, help me to be more Christlike in my thoughts and actions.

Reflection Questions:

- What things does your mind dwell on that are not helpful to your relationship with God or others?

- How often do you fill your mind with the good things of God?

- How does your thinking need to change in order to live out the teaching of these Scriptures?

DAY 3 – Prepare, Read, Meditate, Reflect

PREPARE

Begin by praying and asking God to help you understand His Word and respond to it with a willing heart.

READ

Read **Philippians 4:10-23** several times. Take note of words and phrases that stand out to you.

***Philippians 4:10-23** I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send

greetings. 22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Christian generosity to others. This is exactly what the Philippian church did. God provided for others' needs through their generosity. Providing for the needs of those around us should be one of the fruits of our relationship with God. The Philippians' generosity was evidence of their faith in the Lord. Our lives should be marked by this same generosity. As we give or provide for others, we should not do so expecting to receive something in return, but because this is what the Lord instructs us to do. Lord, help me become more Christlike in my actions toward others.

Reflection Questions:

- How have you learned to be content in Jesus through both good and difficult circumstances?

- Would your attitude be different if your situation was more like the Christians of the first century?

- In what ways can you show Christian generosity to others?

MEDITATE

- Pray and ask God to lead you in understanding His Word.
- Pray that God's Holy Spirit will use the Scripture in the process of leading you to be more like Christ.

REFLECT

Devotional Thought: Once again in this section, Paul opens with rejoicing, thankful for the care and concern that the Philippians showed to him. He had been in some very difficult circumstances, whether in jail, hungry, or lacking in other physical provisions, yet he learned to be content in all things, good and bad. It is with this understanding that he wrote the famous verse, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* For most of us, Paul's dire situation is far from the reality of our daily lives. Would we give our praise and devotion to God if we faced similar circumstances and persecution? Doing all things through Christ is not about winning the game or nailing a job interview; it is about relying on Jesus and finding contentment in Him through both abundance and hardship.

In finding this contentment, we are encouraged not only to focus on our own situation, but also to show

D-GROUP DISCUSSION TIME – Week 6

OPEN WITH PRAYER

TALK ABOUT YOUR WEEK

- How are things with your soul this week? Your body? Your spirit?
- This week I struggled to follow Jesus when ...
- This week I felt close to God because ...
- Would anyone like to share something the Lord has done in your life this week through the study of these Scriptures?

HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ ALOUD THE SCRIPTURES FROM THIS WEEK

Reading 1: *Philippians 4:1-7* *Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!*

2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. This week's devotionals focused on Christlikeness in hearts, thoughts, and actions. Do each of us need to focus on one of these areas? How has this passage of Scripture taught us to be more Christlike?
2. How can we stand firm in a dark and confused world?

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Discussion Questions

3. What things consume our time and thoughts that do not need to be a part of our lives?

Reading 2: *Philippians 4:10-23* *I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send

greetings. 22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with
your spirit. Amen.

Prayer Requests

[illegible]

Discussion Questions

4. Do we view circumstances and contentment any differently in light of Paul's example for the Church?
5. In what way can we show Christian generosity to others?

Final Group Meeting Discussion Questions

1. Rejoicing is a theme throughout the book of Philippians. We are to pray with joy (1:3), rejoice with others (2:18), rejoice in the Lord (3:1), and rejoice instead of being anxious (4:4-6). How has your view of rejoicing changed? How can we find joy through every circumstance and situation?
2. Philippians portrays Christ Jesus as highly exalted above all things (2:5-11). For God's people, the goal is all about knowing Christ, gaining Christ, being found in Christ, and having faith and life in Christ (3:7-11). Share how you have grown in Christ through this discipleship study.

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