

GROW

Upward. Inward. Outward.

ADULT CONNECTION



NOVEMBER 2016

PHILIPPIANS



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

As we continue the study through Philippians, a reoccurring theme is Unity. We are reminded that unity is the key to accomplishing great things for the Lord. We see this when we come together for events such as the Community Fall Festival and Harvest Sunday. The goal in all of these special days here at FBC is to see the church come together for the common cause to reach our community with the gospel of Christ. The word community as we use it here is not simply a particular radius around our church facilities, but also our circle of influence and relationships where community takes place in our lives each and every day. With this in mind, let us work collectively to accomplish great things and reach our community for Christ.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7 day approach for both the teacher and the members to approach each week's study and to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that each teacher may have their own approach for preparing to teach the lesson and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes him or her most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7 day approach for each one's own personal study and encouragement.

Through this curriculum the primary goal is for you to learn and know the Bible while growing spiritually in the process of applying the Word.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Partnering with Others

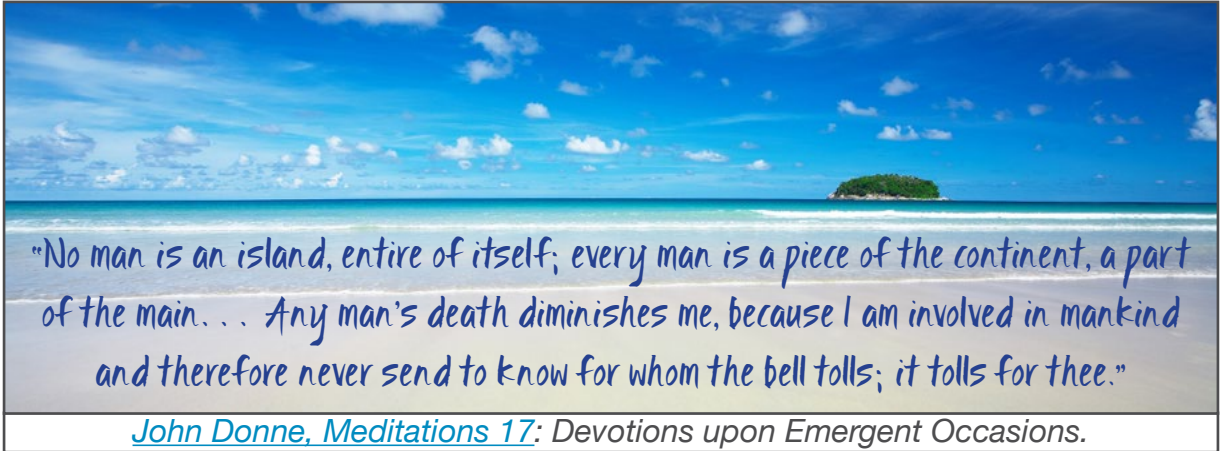
Philippians 2:19-30

Focal Verse:

"But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel."

Philippians 2:22

Introduce



Donne pens these words to demonstrate that an individual doesn't live in isolation, but rather he is connected to mankind as a whole; he has rightly understood that when God created the world He created mankind for companionship. Not only did God design marriage as a partnership between a man and a woman for a lifetime ([Gen 2:18](#)), but He also "set[s] the solitary in families" so that everyone could benefit from being connected to each other ([Psalm 68:6-7](#)). Moreover, God designed nations, such as Israel, to partner together rather than functioning merely as individuals seeking their own prosperity; for example, the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness required everyone to partner together, repairing the wall to the city of Jerusalem during the time of Nehemiah necessitated everyone work on his part, and the rebuilding of



Introduce

the second temple in AD 515 during the time of Haggai and Zechariah involved the entire nation's participation. Not only did Israel partner with her own citizens, but God desired her people to be a blessing to every nation. At the inception of the Hebrew people through Abram, God declares, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" ([Gen 12:3](#)). From the very foundation of the world, God desired men to be in fellowship with Him and partnership with one another.

Today, many people think that with the advent of the Internet and social media that we have become even more connected—and indeed in some ways we have, but in many ways we have become even more isolated because as a society we perceive ourselves as self-sufficient and fiercely individualistic which often leads to not having the depth of relationships we once had; we want interaction with people only when it's convenient or benefits us. The most-telling sign of how our culture has become disconnected occurs either at the dinner table, even if we still sit to eat with one another, or at a sporting event; surrounded by friends and family or even thousands of other spectators, many have their heads lowered typing on their phones, disengaged from interacting with others physically around them. Posting a pithy saying on Facebook or Twitter doesn't constitute friendship or even partnership;



certainly we can have viable friendships through social media, but those friendships and partnerships involve more than hitting a few keys on a keyboard every now and then. The types of connections that we often have with other people through social media fail greatly in comparison to the past deep connection we had with people whom we saw face to face in bygone years. In the midst of our busy schedules, we need to have true companionship and partnership once again.

Paul, in his direct address to the Philippians in [2:19-30](#), reveals the need for partnerships that go beyond mere familiarity. Through the adverse circumstances which have directly affected his life, such as his current imprisonment in Rome, Paul demonstrates the keys for having healthy relationships in which we partner together. Both Paul and the Philippians express mutual concern for one another which leads both of them to act conscientiously and compassionately so that the other's needs are met and the gospel advances.

Key
Question

Why do we need partners in ministry? In respect to our society, how have you seen relationships overall either improve or decline because of the Internet or social media?

Philippians 2:19-21

PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING CONSCIENTIOUS:

In [2:19-30](#), Paul uses this opportunity in the letter to cite two examples of men who have the mind of Christ ([Phil 2:5](#)): Timothy and Epaphroditus. Both men exhibit unselfish character in which they serve others rather than their own interests. Indeed, Paul makes this clear when he states that everyone **seeks** his **own** interests rather than **the things which are of Christ Jesus** ([v. 21](#)) except Timothy and by extension Epaphroditus. When we have Christ's perspective, we become more acutely aware of opportunities in which we can partner with others in service. Although this passage reflects more of an informational section unique to both Paul and the Philippians' circumstances, we can still learn and apply the principles of an effective partnership. In [2:19-21](#), we observe three areas in which partners should exercise conscientiousness: they must 1) have an intimate knowledge of the situation, 2) be unified, and 3) be genuinely concerned for the other's interests.



First, in order to have an effective partnership we must have an intimate knowledge of the situation of those with whom we partner. Under house

arrest in Rome awaiting his trial before Caesar, Paul has the freedom to correspond with the Philippians so he has heard some of what has occurred during his absence from them, including their worry about their friend Epaphroditus who almost died during his mission to help Paul ([Phil 2:26](#)), but he doesn't know their situation as intimately as he wishes. Therefore, he desires to dispatch Timothy so that he might **be encouraged** when he **knows** their **state**—in other words Paul wants to have more in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the Philippians' situation so that he can not only pray for them, but also that he might disciple them through Timothy's presence. In order for us to help someone effectively, we must know their situation—giving general advice can sometimes not only be unwelcomed, but it can be harmful to the situation. Therefore, we must know the details of a situation before we attempt to help; we must know our partners' strengths and weaknesses; we must know their resources and limitations. A partner doesn't come alongside and take control, but rather a partner supplements the work being done and encourages the team to work together toward a common goal.

Why is knowing our partners' situation intimately important? Can you think of a situation in which someone didn't know the full circumstances, but yet offered advice or tried to help? How did it turn out?

Question
1

Second, in order to have an effective partnership we must be united in our perspective; Paul can send Timothy because he shares the same

Instruct

perspective and concern for the Philippians as he does; in fact, Paul even states that he has **no one like-minded**. Recall that while in prison Paul encounters people who preach the gospel with the wrong motives ([Phil 1:15-16](#)). These people participate in ministry because of their selfish motives—they want to receive praise and accolades rather than truly helping people. Timothy, on the other hand, thinks like Paul does; he has partnered with Paul not for selfish reasons, but rather because of his genuine care and concern for people. When we partner with others, we have one goal—introduce people into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ and help them grow in their walk; although we have one goal, we have many different avenues to achieve that singular goal. God has placed us in distinct situations in life for the express purpose of sharing the gospel. The people God has called me to reach will differ from those to whom He has sent you. Yet, our purpose and call remain the same though our opportunities and methods may differ. Therefore, let us joyfully consider “being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” just as Paul urged the Philippians ([Phil 2:2](#)) so that we might partner with each other to reach the world by seeing others through the mind of Christ Jesus ([Phil 2:5](#)).

Why do we need like-minded partners in both our daily walk and the ministry to which God has called us?

Question
2

Third, in order to have an effective partnership we must be genuinely concerned for our partners' interests. In [Phil 2:4](#), Paul writes, “Let each of

you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Here in verses [20 and 21](#), Paul appeals to Timothy as an example of someone who has actually taken this advice to heart and applied it; thus, he explains that Timothy will sincerely care for their state because he seeks the same things which are of Christ Jesus. Exhibiting genuine care means that we have a heart for service just as Jesus did. He demonstrated His genuine care for us when He obediently died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin ([Rom 5:8](#)). If we genuinely care about someone, we will assist them in any way possible, not making them dependent upon us, but rather liberating them through their mature growth in Christ to become productive members of the kingdom of God. Genuine care for others doesn’t depend upon being recognized or thanked by others or even a glamorous position which everyone will notice, but rather it depends on how much we love God who enables us to love others unconditionally just as He does ([1 John 4:19-21](#)).

What does genuine care and concern for others look like in the church today?

Question
3

Philippians 2:22-24

PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING OF GOOD CHARACTER:

Paul commends Timothy to the Philippians because he has **proven character**. The word **proven** actually means “that which has been tested”; in other words, Timothy has demonstrated his character in an observable way to the Apostle Paul as they have ministered together. Paul considers Timothy like a spiritual son in ministry whom he has

discipled and watched mature in the Lord, so he has seen first-hand Timothy's character on their missionary journeys together. In anything we do in life, maintaining a good character is of utmost importance because not only is it hard to repair if damaged but it also reflects on our heritage in Christ. In [Proverbs 22:1](#), Solomon describes the value of having a good character or reputation: "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold." Having a proven character means that we have the right motives, act with integrity, and live faithfully according to God's Word (see [2 Tim 1:2-11](#)).

In-Depth Information



Paul has known Timothy since his first missionary journey to Galatia when he visited Derbe and Lystra.

Likely, Timothy was saved during this time for Paul elsewhere calls him "a true son in the faith" ([1 Tim 1:2](#)).

Often Paul speaks of people who accept the gospel under his ministry as spiritual "children" ([1 Cor 4:15](#); [Gal 4:19](#); [Philemon 1:10](#)). Paul, therefore, has an intimate relationship with Timothy because not only did he accept Christ but Paul also had the opportunity to disciple him personally. As Paul travels to Galatia on his second missionary journey, he encourages Timothy to join him so he could disciple him in the ministry ([Acts 16:1-5](#)). Because Paul takes time to invest in Timothy, he has first-hand knowledge of his character.

Besides the three general traits listed above, what traits should someone demonstrate who has "proven character?"

Question
4

PARTNER WITH OTHERS BY BEING COMPASSIONATE:

In addition to Timothy, Paul also cites Epaphroditus as an example of a faithful partner in ministry who should be emulated. Paul not only describes him as a **brother**, but also as a **fellow worker** and **fellow soldier**—in other words a partner in ministry alongside of him. When the Philippians had heard of Paul’s imprisonment, they eagerly sent Epaphroditus to help in any way he could ([v. 25](#)). As he **ministered** to Paul, somewhere along the way he became physically **sick** even to the point of **death** ([vv. 26-27](#)). Not only was Paul grieved while in prison, but word had gotten back to the Philippians and they became **distressed**, or worried, about the situation as well. However, **God** has **mercy** not only upon Epaphroditus by healing him, but also Paul so that He didn’t add **sorrow upon sorrow** while he was in prison. Consequently, along with this letter, Paul sends Epaphroditus back to the Philippians so that they may **rejoice** and **receive him with all gladness**.

As partners, therefore, we ought to exercise compassion toward one another in the ministry. Paul, Epaphroditus, and the Philippians all express compassion toward one another in these verses. First, we see the initial act of compassion from the Philippians by rendering aid to a fellow partner in ministry in need. The Philippians do not hesitate to send



Instruct

Epaphroditus, but do so immediately when they learn about the need. Second, we observe compassion from Paul because he is concerned about the **distress** that the Philippians have from the news of Epaphroditus' sickness. Paul could have been self-centered and looked only at his situation surmising that Epaphroditus was more useful to him in prison so he could have urged him to remain in Rome, but Paul understands the need to encourage the Philippians mutually by sending him back so that they might know that their **messenger** is well. Third, we see compassion from Epaphroditus toward Paul; even though Paul describes him as **coming close to death**, Epaphroditus put aside his personal needs **to supply what was lacking** in Paul's life at the moment ([vv. 29-30](#)).

In what way can we show compassion to others with whom we are partners?

Question
5

Inspire

This week we have examined what partnership in our ministry should look like. In order to have an effective partnership, we must be both conscientious and compassionate—and this requires an intimate and deep relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, to be conscientious we must know our partners' situation intimately, be unified, and have genuine concern. Not only must we be conscientious, but we must also have good character and help in the right way—not

enabling dependence, but helping our partners to mature in the Lord while assisting them in their need.

We live in a reactionary society in which people often respond based on emotion rather than assessing logic and facts; some people jump to conclusions based upon only a scant amount of information without the due process of hearing all the facts. As a child, I looked forward to going to the public library's story hour—and this one was particularly special because it would be followed by an Easter egg hunt. Waiting for my mother to end her phone conversation, before the days of cordless phones even, my sister decided to climb on the bathroom vanity, stop the sink, and turn on the water. Within minutes, the water began

cascading over the side, flooding the bathroom into the hall. While my sister was doing this, I had begged and pleaded with her to stop this insanity so we could go to the library on time, but she stubbornly refused. Just before



my mother hung up the phone, my sister vanished and I was standing there trying to assess the situation and how to stop the water and clean it up. Turning the corner, my mother saw the mess and without stopping to gather the facts assumed that I had done it. I attempted to explain what happened, but my mother countered with the fact that my sister was too little to climb on the vanity and make that much of a mess. Not only was I being punished for a crime that I didn't commit, but I also

missed the coveted story time. Some time later after my mother cleaned the flooded area, she discovered that I had been telling the truth because my sister's pant legs were wet and mine were dry—oh how helpful it would have been had my mother known all of the facts of my situation before reacting to issue punishments.

A partnership requires that we take time and invest in each other. Knowing each other doesn't just come from answering a few trivial questions about likes and dislikes, but rather it comes from working together and seeing one another's character on a daily basis. How can we have a true partnership if we only see our partner once or twice a week on Sundays or Wednesdays? We need to be intimately involved in each other's lives, not as gossips or busybodies, but as concerned partners who want the best not only for a particular person, but God and His church as a whole. When we advance beyond the basics of what our modern society thinks is knowing someone, then we will be truly able to partner with one another and help strengthen each other in the right way.

In Prayer



Prayerfully consider how effective a partner you have been. Ask God to show you new avenues for partnering with the members of our church to reach the community.

Incorporate

Ask God to help you identify the people who have partnered with you over the years. Why were they good partners? How did they help you grow in the Lord? What character traits did they display?

According to biblical standards, what does it mean to be a good partner? How can we help someone in the right way? Why is merely “throwing money” at a problem not usually the best way to fix it?

Incorporate

Our church has many partnerships with organizations in the community: [Hands of Hope](#) (homeless ministry), [Beautiful Feet](#), [Presbyterian Night Shelter](#), Good News Club (John Spicer Elementary), and Senior Centers and Retirement Communities. By our church being active in the community, we have the ability to share the gospel daily and see the kingdom grow. In which of these areas do you currently partner? If you don't, please prayerfully consider how you can partner in our community to share the gospel. If God gives you any ideas about partnering with organizations in our community write them here and share them with your Connect Class leader and the staff.

Incorporate to Impact



We can legally partner with public schools and share the gospel with children. Currently, we have one school, John Spicer Elementary, but in the Fall of 2017 we will start at O.H. Stowe. We need you to partner with us to reach these schools and impact our community. To be effective at reaching the children with Christ and ministering to their families, we need at least 6 people at each school. We will train you in the area in which you desire to serve: music, Bible teaching, or sitting amongst the children and being a friend to them. God has opened the door for us to partner with our community by meeting the needs of children and their families; will you respond to this call? For more information about how you can serve, contact kathyoatman@fbcfw.org.

Journal: Document God's Work

November 13, 2016



*Persisting
in the Word
Philippians 3:1-14*

Focal Verse:

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:14

Introduce

Every February the city of Fort Worth hosts the Cowtown Marathon, bringing dedicated runners from all over the world to compete in a grueling twenty-six-mile course that lasts over seven-and-a-half hours. Preparation to run in such a difficult race starts not merely days or even weeks before the event, but rather years.

Although the runners may have radically different techniques for training or even styles of running, they all have one goal: win the race.

For a moment, let's consider two individuals who have decided to run in the 2017 race and observe how they prepare to achieve their goal. The first runner begins training by running daily nearly three years before the start of the marathon. As he trains, he begins at a fairly moderate pace by running two miles a day, but as he progresses he gradually builds up his stamina adding another mile per month until he reaches the twenty-six-mile plateau. Several months before the race, he begins to study maps and run the course for the marathon, taking into consideration the terrain as well as identifying the areas in which he will need to consume water and electrolytes along the route. In addition, he interviews some of the past winners of the marathon to get advice about his technique for running the race.

The second runner, however, differs in his strategy for preparation because he comes from a long line of runners who have done well not

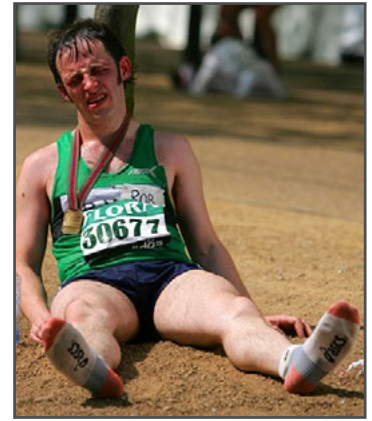


*Bob Booth (Photographer)
February 28, 2015—Fort Worth, TX
Published by: Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

Introduce

only in the Cowtown Marathon, but also in other marathons around the world and even the Olympics. The runner himself has also won several races, included the prestigious Boston Marathon. Feeling he is in good enough shape to run the race already, he doesn't put forth much effort to train until a couple of weeks before the marathon—after all he thinks he's the ultimate specimen of health. Being raised in Fort Worth, he believes that he knows the course like the back of his hand, so he doesn't bother to run or even examine it before the race. He feels confident that he has this marathon in the bag and will receive the championship trophy for completing the race in record time.

On race day, both runners start at the same place and both have all the right equipment to run the race well, but the results differ drastically. The second runner fails to complete the race because he had placed confidence in the things of the flesh—his past achievements, his genetic DNA, and his own athletic superiority. The first runner, however, not only finishes the race, but he wins it



because he had a plan and trained diligently. As believers, Paul urges us not to place confidence in things of the flesh or even our past successes, but he encourages us to place confidence in Christ by being conformed to His image and pressing on toward the goal to which He has called us.

Key
Question

What is the goal to which Jesus has called us and in what ways can we prepare ourselves to accomplish it?

Philippians 3:1-6

RESIST PLACING CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH:

In the introduction, we saw the disastrous consequences of a runner who placed his confidence in his past achievements and athletic pedigree, not truly understanding the path to victory. At one point in his life, Paul, like this fictional runner, failed to comprehend God's Word and identify the path that leads to eternal life. He had placed his confidence, not in the grace of God, but in his heritage and personal achievements. In [Phil 3:1-6](#), Paul recalls his former way of thinking which leads to a warning to the Philippians about placing **confidence in the flesh** ([v. 3](#)).

Paul begins [verse 1](#) on a positive note with a command for the church to **rejoice in the Lord**, but he quickly turns to warn them again about the dangers of trusting in the flesh over God. When we have the right perspective in terms of God and salvation, worship becomes authentic and joyous, but when our perspective becomes skewed by legalistic religious activities in which we go through the motions it becomes tedious and onerous. By way of reminder, Paul admonishes them to **beware** of those who promote works through religious practices as a means of attaining eternal life ([3:2-3](#)). Specifically, he condemns the ritualistic practice of circumcision when it interferes with the authentic **worship of God**. Since the time of Abraham, the circumcision of male children served as an outward reminder of the participation in God's covenant, but it never meant that a person automatically inherited eternal life through their physical heritage ([Rom 9:6-8](#)).

In-Depth Information



In [verse 2](#), Paul uses very harsh language against his opponents when he calls them **dogs**, **evil workers**, and **mutilators**. In our culture, to call someone a “dog” (often spelled dawg) carries with it little offense—what’s up dawg? However, to a Jew in the first century, calling someone a dog was highly offensive. Dogs were not pets or man’s best friend, but they were seen as vile scavengers which consumed garbage off of the street. Consequently, the Jews used this term to describe Gentiles—those unclean and unrepentant people who were not part of God’s covenant with Israel. The Jews thought that performing good works by following religious duties earned salvation, but because they never actually had a relationship with Christ they were **evil workers** who mislead people and **mutilated** the flesh because they did not understand the true intention of God’s Word.

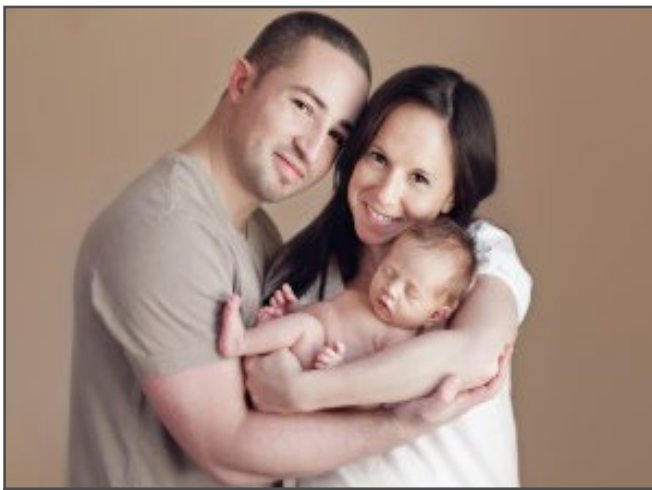
Just as many in Israel wrongly placed their confidence in circumcision as more than an outward sign, many people in the church today wrongly place confidence in their baptism as a means of salvation. Like circumcision, baptism only reflects the true inner change through a symbolic, yet visible, expression; as a result,



baptism in and of itself cannot change the heart and it cannot save, but rather it serves as an expression of the transformation that Jesus has produced within our hearts ([Rom 4:1-11](#)). Plainly speaking, if we do not have a relationship with Christ when we are plunged under the water, we will not have a relationship when we come out of it either. Therefore, our confidence should not be in religious ritual, but rather a renewed heart through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul, by his own admission, once was a such a misguided person who placed confidence in his own heritage and his own achievements. He declares that **if anyone** has reason to **have confidence in the flesh** he does ([v. 4](#)). First, he demonstrates why he had **confidence** in his heritage. His parents had followed the Law perfectly and had their son circumcised on the eighth day ([Lev 12:3](#)). He was born into God's people of promise, **Israel**—even being born into the small, but significant **tribe of Benjamin**. In every way, he thought that his heritage had given him an advantage. Today, many people express confidence in their

“Christian” heritage. They believe that they were born Christians—they have been “Christian” all their lives because their parents were or simply because they were born into a “Christian” nation; they are “Christians” because they have always gone to church from the cradle to the grave. In addition,



We are not born a Christian, but rather make a conscious decision to follow Christ in life.

some merely call themselves “Christians” because they are not Jewish, Muslim, Hindi, or any other religion. The Bible clearly addresses these issues: we are not Christian because of our heritage, birth, or church attendance, but we are followers of Christ because we have repented of our sins, believed in Jesus, and surrendered our lives fully to Him.

In-Depth Information



*Paul specifies being from the **tribe of Benjamin** for two reasons. First, Benjamin was the last-born of Isaac and Rebekah—his favored wife ([Gen 35:16-18](#)). When he thought Joseph had died, when in actuality his brothers had sold him into slavery, Isaac cherished his youngest son even more. In addition, Benjamin was also significant because it produced the first King of Israel, Saul ([1 Samuel 9:1-2](#)).*

Second, Paul had not only wrongly placed confidence in his heritage, but also in his personal achievements. Not only did Paul speak the **Hebrew** language, but he was also an expert in the Law as a **Pharisee**. As a Pharisee, he was **zealous** to do what he thought were the things of God, but in reality he was opposing God. As a Pharisee, he **persecuted the church** because he thought he knew God’s word and was following the Law correctly. He saw himself as **righteous** and **blameless** according to the Law—following it to the letter. Paul again makes it abundantly clear that our achievements—whether it’s how much we think we know or how much we think we’ve done—cannot merit eternal life and, as we will see in the next section, he now considers all of these human deeds **rubbish** ([Phil 3:8](#)).

In-Depth Information



In [verse 5](#), Paul claims that he is a **Hebrew of Hebrews**. He doesn't use this term arrogantly to suggest that he was the "best" Hebrew, better than anyone else, but rather it highlights the depth of his education. Most people at this time spoke the more common language Aramaic, but those educated, especially in the Scriptures, would also be able to read and speak Hebrew—the language of the Old Testament.

What are some areas in our Christian heritage in which we place confidence that might hinder us from accomplishing the goals that Christ has given us for the future?

Question
1

Philippians 3:7-11

REMAIN CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST:

Paul begins this section ([3:7-11](#)) highlighting a major shift in his thinking; through his encounter with Christ, on the road to Damascus, he has come to realize that what he thought was **gain**, or an advantage for him, in reality should be **counted loss**, that is nothing, in terms **of Christ**. Having a post-graduate degree, a good-paying job with benefits, a home with a multitude of possessions, a large base of family and friends, or even having freedom as an American citizen is of no advantage to us in terms of eternal life. The only thing of significance in our lives is the **knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord** ([v. 8](#)). The word **knowledge** here means that which is attained through personal experience; therefore, to have **knowledge of Christ** means that we must have a personal

Instruct

relationship with Him and not just know cognitive information about Him. If we lose everything in this world and have Christ, we have lost nothing; but if we have rejected Christ in this world, we have lost everything (see also [Matt 16:25-27](#)).



Our righteousness is as “filthy rags” ([Isa 64:6](#)).

Paul further emphasizes that salvation, that is to **be found in Him**, doesn't come through one's own **righteousness** by **the Law** ([v. 9](#)); in other words, we can't be good enough on our own merits to inherit eternal life ([Rom 3:10-11](#)). We must realize that the only way we can have salvation is **by faith** through the perfect sacrifice that our sinless (righteous) Savior endured on the cross. When we have that relationship with the Father based on Jesus' righteousness, we will naturally conform with the help of the Holy Spirit to the image of Christ.

What does it mean to have the knowledge of Christ?

Question
2

Therefore, Paul identifies three ways that we can have a more in-depth relationship with Christ by conforming our lives to Him. First, Paul desires to know Him and the power of His resurrection ([v. 10](#)). To know Him, means to have a relationship with Him on a daily basis through worship, Bible study, prayer, and service. To know the power of the His

resurrection means that we allow Him to transform our lives—attitudes, thoughts, actions, and words. In [Romans 6:4](#), Paul explains this concept clearly: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” To **know the power of the resurrection**, we must surrender the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit so that He guides us and transforms us from the inside out.



In what ways can we be conformed to His resurrection, specifically?

Question
3

Second, Paul aspires to know Christ more intimately through the **fellowship of His sufferings**. The apostle isn't wishing that more trouble and heartache would find him, but rather that he might continue to have opportunity to minister just as Christ did—even if it means that he must suffer for the sake of the gospel ([2 Tim 2:10](#)). Before His crucifixion, Jesus plainly tells His disciples: “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” ([John 15:20](#)). On the road to Damascus, he also reveals to Paul “how many things he must suffer for My name's sake” ([Acts 9:16](#)). Serving Christ is difficult and it will, at times, result in suffering because of the evil nature of this age, but we ought to gladly endure suffering when it comes and not let it dissuade us from the work to

Instruct

which we have been called. Even as Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” ([Heb 12:2](#)), we should participate in the ministry to which He has called us despite the risks and challenges.

Third, Paul also longs to be **conformed to His death**; to conform to Jesus’ death means that we die to our old, sinful way of life and we participate in the new life that He gives through His resurrection ([Luke 9:23-24](#)). We no longer live according to our selfish desires which alienated us from the Lord, but rather we live obediently in accordance with God’s will. In [Gal 2:20](#), Paul explains, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Even though we will never be perfect as He is, let us strive toward maturity in Christ to make the transformation in our lives evident to all.

In what ways can we be conformed to His death, specifically?

Question
4

In-Depth Information



In [verse 11](#), Paul writes, “**If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.**” In English, the translation of this verse sounds as if Paul expresses doubt about whether or not he will be resurrected from the dead. However, in the Greek, it actually gives the idea of an assured resurrection; thus, Paul knows that if he dies before Jesus comes that one day he will be resurrected bodily when He returns.

In-Depth Information—continued

Therefore, the uncertainty comes not from doubt about the resurrection, but rather whether or not he will actually be dead when Christ returns or if he is dead then in what manner his death may occur--as an elderly man, as a martyr, or even executed as a prisoner never tasting freedom again.

Philippians 3:12-14

REMEMBER THE GOAL:

In [3:12-14](#), Paul stresses the need for us to focus on the **goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus** ([v. 14](#)). The goal is that which Paul has just described in [3:7-11](#)—being conformed to the image of Christ. We need to seek to be conformed to Christ daily because we are not **already perfected** and have not **attained** complete maturity in Christ, but rather we should learn and grow until we have been called home; therefore, our growth in Christ becomes a daily struggle to be more like Him and not let our fleshly desires resurface and dominate our lives. We must forget **those things which are behind**, whether our heritage, personal achievements, or even our failures, and focus on **those things that are ahead**. That which lies ahead is the aspiration to continue to die to our old way of life and manifest the inner change that Jesus has produced within us.

What are some of the areas which lie behind us that we need to forget lest we stumble?
What are some of the areas in front of us on which we need to concentrate?

Question
5

Our life as a Christian is a journey which is like a marathon that requires dedication and training. We can't win a marathon based on our heritage or past achievements, nor can we inherit eternal life through anything other than Jesus Christ. Too many of us, however, undertake our lives as a sprint rather than a marathon. We begin at the starting line by sprinting as hard as we can and somewhere along the way we faint and grow weary. Others of us take an average pace, but we continually live in the past rather than look toward the future. We may live in the past because we see it as our "glory days"; we may live in the past because we have stopped growing in our relationship with the Lord daily; we may live in the past because we can't forgive ourselves or others because of something that happened. It becomes dangerous to live in the past because it impedes our advance and may even cause us to stumble because we aren't looking at the opportunities ahead of us. Therefore, we must ask how we are running the race. Are you still at the starting line because you never truly had a relationship with Jesus? Are you looking back, distracted by the past? Did you start out sprinting but somewhere along the way grew tired? Are you



If we trust in anything other than Christ, we will fall well short of the finish line.

running a slow, methodical race in which you are growing in Christ daily becoming more conformed to His image?

In Prayer



Ask God to help you evaluate your journey as follower of Him. Pray that God would reveal any areas in which you are running successfully as well as those that need growth. If you are unsure whether or not you have a genuine relationship with Him, pray and ask Him to reveal it to you and then talk to your Connect Class leader or the Ministerial Staff.

Incorporate

We have learned this week that our life in Christ is like a marathon. Pray and ask God in what areas of your life that you need more training so that you can finish the race well.

Are there any areas in the past that you hold on to? If there are, list them here and ask God to help you let go of them and look to the future.

In what ways in your life do you need to be more conformed to Jesus in His resurrection, sufferings, and death?

Journal: Document God's Work

November 20, 2016



*Progressing
in the Word
Philippians 3:15-21*

Focal Verse:

"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you."

Philippians 3:15

Introduce

Perhaps some of us have a love for gardening and every Spring we get an itch to turn our front yards into either a place of beauty with flowers or our backyards into a veritable vegetable buffet with all types of fruit-bearing plants. Usually, around mid-March, we begin to till the soil, adding compost and fertilizer so that we can replenish the nutrients in the ground to have healthy plants. While we are tilling the ground, we try to pick out all of the weeds and perhaps even lay a barrier to keep them from growing in our beds. After preparing the soil, we either plant seeds in our now nutrient-rich rows or we go to the store and pick out the best seedlings that we can find. After we get them into the soil, we then thoroughly water the ground and wait.

Now we can sit back, relax, and wait for the harvest—right? No, after the initial preparation and planting, our work has only just begun. If we only waited to interact with our gardens until the time of harvest came, most of them would either die or be largely unproductive; therefore, we must help



our gardens to mature into fruit-bearing plants or petal-laden masterpieces of beauty. Because of the curse from sin in the Garden of Eden, the ground produces pesky things known as weeds; in order for the plants to get the nutrients they need and not to be choked, we need to constantly extract them from our gardens. If that weren't enough, we have several different kinds of insects and birds that can devastate our crops so we need to

Introduce

monitor our gardens daily to keep them pest-free. Finally, the heat and relatively dry weather here in Texas requires that we water our gardens almost daily, especially if they survive into the hottest months. When we take the proper steps to care for our gardens, they will become fruitful and productive.



In the same way that we care for our gardens, our lives as followers of Christ require attention in order to mature daily in Him so that we can become the most productive members of the community that we can be. Too often, however, we invest and grow after our initial salvation experience with fervor and excitement, but as time goes on we become lax—we dread the maintenance of our lives because it has become difficult and even odious to do the things which help us mature in Christ. For this reason, Paul encourages the Philippians to continue their journey of maturation in the faith. Last week, we learned that we ought to “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:14); this week we will learn how Paul envisions us growing in Christ so that we can continue our journey unhindered by worldly conflicts in our walks and be conformed to the image of Christ on a daily basis.

Key Question

In what ways in our lives do we need to mature in Christ to be productive in His church?

Philippians 3:15-16

CONDUCT YOURSELF IN MATURITY:

In last week's lesson, we learned about the need to be conformed to the image of Christ in our daily walk and this week we will continue that theme. In [Phil 3:15-21](#), Paul outlines three areas in which we ought to conform our lives to Christ through our conduct: 1) in maturity, 2) as an example, and 3) as heavenly citizens.

Paul begins by appealing to **as many as those** of us **who are mature** to **have this mind**; thus, the result of conformity with Christ is maturity in our thinking. When he exhorts the Philippians to **have this mind**, Paul recalls his command in [Phil 2:5](#) which we learned meant to think or have the same perspective as Christ. Mature thinking in Christ contrasts starkly with the world's perspective which focuses on one's self. Instead of being self-centered in our thinking, we should seek to conduct ourselves in a way that honors God by how we live. If we have a relationship with the Lord, He **will reveal** any area to us in which we fail to think or live with maturity. Consequently, a mature perspective in the Lord displays several characteristics: a love for God and others ([Matt 22:36-40](#)), obedience ([John 14:15](#)), compassion ([1 Peter 3:8](#)), an attitude of service ([Phil 2:3-4](#)), and discernment ([Phil 1:9-10](#); [Hosea 14:9](#))—to name a few.

In-Depth Information



The KJV uses the word **perfect** instead of **mature**. Indeed, the word Paul uses can mean **perfect** or **complete**, but in this context it signifies **maturity**; only one perfect person has ever lived on this earth and He paid the penalty by

In-Depth Information—continued



giving His life for the sake of our sin; therefore, our goal should be progressing in His Word so that we may pattern our lives after His.

What are some other characteristics that a person with mature, Christ-like thinking should exhibit? Using the characteristics above, give specific examples that you have observed where people have exercised mature thinking.

Question
1

Exhibiting mature thinking in Christ reflects an on-going process in which we must consciously engage each day to “renew our minds” ([Rom 12:2](#)). In [Phil 3:12](#), Paul notes that he has not **already attained** maturity, but that he strives for the goal of becoming more conformed to the image of Christ each day; in [verse 16](#), Paul indicates that both he and the Philippians have grown or matured in this goal: **Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained it**, he explains, we ought to continue our personal growth progressing from the point where we had previously ended. In the introduction, we were reminded that a garden requires nutrients to grow—whether through fertilizer or other natural means. In the same way, to grow in Christ we need to nourish our lives by maintaining a personal relationship with Him through prayer, Bible study, worship, and connection to other believers through both

discipleship and service. If we are not intimately connected to the vine ([John 15:1-7](#)) and receiving our nourishment directly from Him, ultimately we will bear no fruit and struggle in our walk.

How intentional are you about growing in your walk with Christ? What do you do that helps you to mature? If any, what things hinder your maturation?

Question
2

In order to mature in our thinking, we need to test our thoughts and perspectives against a perfect standard. In [verse 16](#), Paul implores the Philippians to **walk by the same rule**; in other words, as Christians we have a standard by which we have been called to live. Therefore, the standard by which we assess our lives must be



perfect and apart from human opinion. The problem today is that people often use other imperfect human beings as the standard which skews the scales in their favor. When building a house, for example, we wouldn't use a device that we have discovered was imperfect to measure or test the level of the foundation because it would affect the integrity of the entire structure and cause a multitude of problems. Then why would we use an imperfect human standard to judge our lives? God has called us to a higher standard which became manifest through the earthly ministry of Jesus who lived in perfect obedience of the written Word;

Instruct

therefore, we ought to examine our maturity in light of Jesus' perfect standard that He set.

In-Depth Information



The word that Paul uses for rule is from where we get our modern word canon—not the weapon (cannon), but rather a general rule or principle by which something is judged. The Bible, as a collection of books judged by a certain set of criteria for truth, is often referred to as a canon because it's the standard by which we measure our lives.

Why is it important to have a standard by which we judge our walk?

Question
3

Philippians 3:17-19

CONDUCT YOURSELF AS AN EXAMPLE:

When we live according to God's standard, we become an **example** or **pattern** for others to follow. After discussing what it means to display mature thinking, Paul urges the Philippians to **join in following** his **example** ([verse 17](#)). Although we do not set the standard by which we live our lives, we can become an example to others when we imitate the life of the perfect standard—Jesus Christ. In [1 Cor 11:1](#), Paul makes it clear that he is not the standard by which to judge one's life, but rather Christ is; he interjects, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"; Paul is merely an example of the right way to live. In order to know whether or not a

person is worthy to be emulated as an example, we must first know the perfect standard through God's Word; only then can we discern the right way to conduct our lives and identify others who can serve as good examples.



Instead of continuing to describe his positive example of how to **walk** righteously, Paul lists three negative characteristics that violate the standards that God has established. Although they have physically seen the positive example in Paul's life, he now reminds them that the way that violates God's standards leads to **destruction**; Paul refers to these negative examples as **enemies of the cross of Christ** ([v. 18](#)). For those who reject the sacrificial gift of Jesus and remain in their sin violating God's standards, the only recourse in their lives is death. [Psalm 37:38](#) reiterates, "But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off." It grieves the apostle that some have refused to repent and have rejected the Messiah in favor of remaining in their sin, so he **weeps** as he outlines their negative characteristics.

First, he states that their god is their belly ([v. 19](#)). Figuratively, these negative examples follow their own fleshly desires just as one would follow a craving for his favorite food; in other words, they exercise little or no self-control. We live in a society that has become preoccupied or even addicted to many things which have distracted our attention from the Lord; many people often live their lives according to the destructive

principle: “If it feels good, then do it.” Moreover, history indicates that many Roman citizens also lived in such a way in which they indulged their sinful desires even so much so that eventually their cultural degradation destroyed their empire. This lack of self-control stands in stark contrast to one’s obedience to follow the standard that God has set forth in His Word—in other words **walk by the same rule** ([v. 16](#)).

In-Depth Information



*Some have linked the phrase **their god is their belly** with the Jewish dietary laws, especially in light of what Paul warned in [Phil 3:2-3](#) about those who place confidence in the flesh and religious ritual. However, in this context, the phrase is more closely linked with **glorying in their shame** and having their focus **on earthly things** which seems to point more toward succumbing to one’s insatiable, sinful desires.*

In what areas do you see a lack of self-control in our society today and even among those professing to be Christians?

Question
4

Second, Paul contends that **their glory is in their shame**. In this context, the term glory means “delight”; thus, they boast or delight in their shameful activities. Rather than feel remorse for their sin, they celebrate it. In [1 Cor 5:2](#), Paul addresses a sin of sexual misconduct in the Corinthian church by pointing out that they “are puffed up, and have not rather

mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among” them. Even as a church who should have emulated the life of Christ, the Corinthians have taken pride in the commission of this indecent act and glorified the sin rather than mourned over it. Today, many praise their sinful lifestyles and celebrate their sin as moral, upstanding actions; they try to justify their sinful choices by saturating the culture until it is accepted as normal, not even realizing that their lifestyle leads down a path of **destruction**. The prophet Isaiah laments, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” ([Isa 5:20](#)). Instead of glorifying the Lord by imitating Jesus’ righteousness, these people boast and delight in their sin.

In what ways have we seen society celebrate sin instead of mourning it? In what way have we seen this infiltrate the church today?

Question
5

Third, Paul claims that they **set their mind on earthly things**. These people focus on the here and now and live by the motto espoused by a rich man in one of Jesus’ parables; the rich man exclaims, “And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry’” ([Luke 12:19](#)). A person who has his **mind set on earthly things** will often see things from a selfish perspective—how do they benefit me? For this reason, they attempt to find happiness and pleasure in their money and possessions, their hobbies, their relationships, and even in some cases their charitable activities—doing

Instruct

good things for other people with the wrong motives only leads to tiredness rather than true contentment and joy; these individuals wrongly see what they can get out of these areas in their lives now rather than how they can invest in them to make an eternal impact. As a result, Jesus warns, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” ([Matt 6:19-20](#)). Instead of living a humble life of service indebted to God seeking to worship Him by caring for others’ needs, these individuals are self-centered and view things in terms of what they can receive rather than what they can invest.

In what ways do people have their minds set on earthly things today?

Question
6

Philippians 3:20-21

CONDUCT YOURSELF AS A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN:

In this section, Paul reminds the Philippians that they are not **enemies of the cross**, but rather that their **citizenship is in heaven** and they ought to act righteously as good ambassadors. As citizens of the United States, or any country for that matter, we have certain responsibilities to conduct our lives in such a way that best represents our country—not just by following a set or prescribed rules, but rather through our visible character which projects integrity. When we identify ourselves as an

American, especially when we travel abroad, we want others around the world to think highly of us because we as citizens have certain endearing qualities such as:



kindness, charitableness, respectfulness, dignity, love, among many others. Being a Christian also means that we are ambassadors who represent our sovereign Lord and His kingdom to the secular world around us. We have a standard to follow in Christ Jesus so that we can imitate how He lived because He will transform our bodies that they may be conformed to His. In other words, not only can we read about how Jesus lived through Scripture, but we can also live the way He did because He will enable us to act as His ambassadors by guiding our lives through the Holy Spirit.

In what ways do we need to conduct ourselves as ambassadors or citizens of heaven?

Question
7

This week we learned the importance of continuing to grow in our faith by how we conduct our lives. Paul urges us to conduct ourselves with maturity in our perspectives, live as examples, and be good ambassadors as heavenly citizens. In order to mature in our journey, we need to continue progressing in the Word—in terms of applying Scripture by imitating the Living Word—Jesus Christ. Maturing in our faith is much like planting a garden. Planting a garden takes a conscious effort to make it succeed. We can't just throw a bunch of seeds in the ground without any preparation and expect that they yield a good harvest, but rather we plan and prepare how to make them the most fruitful; although God does indeed make the garden grow, it still requires planning and preparation on our part. In order to be more productive in our Christian life, it requires the right perspective in which we must exercise maturity. Although God is the one who began and is currently completing the good work in us ([Phil 1:6](#)), we still are responsible for maintaining the right perspective and continuing to grow in Him.

In addition, gardens can be overtaken by weeds if we don't get rid of them. When our perspective continues to mature in Christ, we can get rid of the sinful areas in our lives that impede our growth. We need to remain vigilant lest we fall back into the pattern of the



negative example that Paul gave; we need to exercise self-control, we need to live obediently by ridding ourselves of sin instead of glorying in it, and we need to have a heavenly perspective in which we invest in the eternal rather than merely looking to our own self-interests here on earth. When we have the right perspective and rid ourselves of sinful degradation, we will be able to reap the harvest which is living as heavenly citizens who are conformed to the image of Christ. Therefore, let us continue to mature in Christ by being ambassadors who represent Him well to the world around us in the way that we live and think.

In Prayer



Ask God to help you live boldly as His ambassador according to the standards He has established in His Son so that you might glorify Him.

Every one of us has an opinion about everything. When we watch television, we have an opinion on the program or news we are viewing. When we interact with other people, whether in person, through texts, over the phone, or even through social media, we have an opinion—or perspective. Think back over your week. When did you have a perspective that clearly emulated Jesus? When did your perspective deviate and perhaps needed to be changed? What can you do to view things more like Christ?

The troubled basketball player, now commentator, Charles Barkley once trumpeted, “I’m not a role model.” In all honesty, Mr. Barkley should not be imitated for many reasons, but his statement in and of itself is inaccurate. On the contrary, Paul tells us to be examples. Critique your life as an example for Christ in the following three areas: 1) do you exercise self-control in every situation, 2) do you participate in sinful activities from which you need to repent, and 3) do you have a self-centered perspective that sees things only in terms of being beneficial to you? Describe how successful you are in these three areas and also list any areas in which you need to change or mature.

Being a citizen of heaven means that we need to represent our Savior as His ambassadors. What are the characteristics of a good ambassador of Christ? How would you rate your life in terms of being an ambassador for Christ and why?

Journal: Document God's Work

Journal: Document God's Work

November 27, 2016



*Protection
through the Word
Philippians 4:1-9*

Focal Verse:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Philippians 4:6

Introduce

Even if we haven't been able to travel outside of the United States much, most of us probably have seen a photograph of one of the British guards standing sentinel at Buckingham Palace where the Queen of England resides when she is in London. As the guards stand in front of the imposing structure behind the ornate gate and wall that separates it from the public street, their brilliant red jackets and coal-black pants and hats stand in stark contrast to the pale limestone walls of the palace. At each archway that enters into the inner sanctum of the palace, the guards stand at attention with their rifles and bayonets ready to defend the Queen's home from an intruder at a moment's notice. Only their stoic, unmovable positions and expressions as they stand guard garner more attention than their uniform. They stand there vigilant because they have a duty to perform which requires the utmost concentration.

In years prior to the security threats that now dominate our world, people could virtually stand next to the guards to have their pictures made; some tourists, however, would attempt to pester the guards incessantly, trying to make them break not



only their concentration but also their character. Despite all of these distractions, the guards never faltered in their training nor did they ever show the slightest agitation by flinching or breaking attention. Obviously, carrying powerful weapons would dissuade most people from doing

Introduce

anything more than silly gestures to get their attention, but in reality their guns aren't their primary source of security. Their training actually benefits them more than their weapons because it helps them refine their character in the face of adversity. Their training has taught them how to guard their minds and block out distractions that aren't deemed serious threats; it has also taught them how to alleviate anxiety and trust their instincts; finally, it has taught them that they work not as an individual, but as a unit so that when trouble does arise they could work together as a company to resolve it.

Just as the training for these guards provides them physical and mental protection, God's Word provides spiritual protection for us if we heed the call to safeguard our lives against certain pitfalls that we might face. In [Philippians 4:1-9](#), Paul outlines four areas in which we must seek training so that we can guard our lives and minds in order to be conformed to Christ when adversity arises, having spiritual peace in our lives in the midst of a chaotic world.

Key
Question

What areas of our lives do we need to guard or fortify as believers?

Philippians 4:1-3

GUARD AGAINST DISUNITY:

In Phil [4:1-3](#), Paul addresses a specific problem between two women in the church who had differing perspectives. Although Paul doesn't go into detail about the source of contention, he does remind the church as a whole to **stand fast in the Lord** (v. 1) which recalls his admonition in [Phil 1:27](#) to **stand fast in one spirit**. As Christians, we are not to compete against one another to get our way, but rather we should have the perspective of Christ which recognizes the needs of others and esteems them highly ([Phil 2:3-4](#)). In Philippi, two women, Euodia (you-o-dee-a) and Syntyche (soon-too-kay), seem to be arguing over their personal preferences; therefore, Paul urges them **to be of the same mind in the Lord** ([v. 2](#)). Because Paul does not address any doctrinal error as he does against those in [Phil 3:1-3](#), we can assume that their difference is only a matter of opinion or perspective or Paul would have outlined their error in thinking explicitly. We need to put personal preferences and opinions aside for the sake of the greater good in the gospel and ministry.

In-Depth Information



In [verse 1](#), Paul regards the Philippians as his **joy and crown**. Even though disunity has occurred within the church, he knows that the overarching spirit of its members is to make the gospel known; this brings great joy to the apostle, but he knows that if they continue on the path of elevating personal preference that the church could lose its focus.

Our society, however, has cultivated an era of choice where personal preference matters more than cooperation. The old campaign slogan from Burger King sums it up well: “Have it your way.” Some Christians want to have it their way in the church; they measure a church like being fitted for formal clothes—how does it fit me? Attendance, participation in serving, and tithing directly depend upon how the church meets their perceived needs—they only come, participate, or give when they see it as significant according to their perspective.



Fortunately, the church is not a democratic institution stuck in status quo by trying to placate the preferences of its members. On the contrary, the church should be a divine monarchy with Christ as the head with members utilizing their spiritual gifts in the positions in which God has placed them ([Eph 1:22](#))—Jesus alone determines the direction of the church along with the perspective of its members.

In what ways has personal preference sidetracked the church from its main purpose?

Question
1

Instead of taking sides, we need to **help** resolve the dispute. Paul urges his **true companion** along with **Clement to help these women** ([v. 3](#)). When it comes to resolving a dispute based upon preference, we need to function as mediators who point to Christ and remind both parties of

their higher calling. We aren't there to debate the issues, but to glorify Christ. In [Eph 4:29](#), Paul writes, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." Too often, we see opinionated arguments as about winning or losing, but in the church it's actually about imparting grace. Imagine if Jesus had not acted graciously while doing the Father's will here on earth and wanted everything His way. Yet, Jesus put aside His personal preferences and focused on His higher purpose—saving men, not destroying them ([Luke 9:56](#)). Therefore, we should remind others of Jesus' grace and help them see the bigger picture of what is important in life—not getting one's way, but serving the Lord obediently with joy.



Lay aside your differences and focus on the goal—the gospel.

In-Depth Information



Paul doesn't identify the name of the true companion, but many think that it was Luke. Luke, as a doctor, likely lived in Philippi which had a well-known medical school. Philippi was also the first place where Luke joined Paul on his missionary journey: "We sought to go to Macedonia [Philippi]" ([Acts 16:10](#)).

What are some ways you can help someone overcome a disagreement by playing a unifying role?

Question
2

Philippians 4:4-5

GUARD YOUR TESTIMONY:

Not only do we need to guard against disunity, but we also need to guard our testimony so that we represent Jesus with integrity. In [Phil 4:4-5](#), Paul describes two traits that should characterize our testimony: joy and gentleness. First, he commands the Philippians to **rejoice in the Lord**. When we focus on our preferences and fail to have the perspective of Christ, we become bitter and tend to complain—especially when things don't go our way. We ought to rejoice in all circumstances; we don't rejoice because of the circumstances, but we rejoice despite them. If we are on the winning side, what reason do we have not to **rejoice**? Having an attitude of joy differentiates us from all others because they have no hope outside of Christ.

What in your life causes you to rejoice?

Question
3

Second, Paul exhorts them to let their gentleness be known to all men; just as responding with joy characterizes our testimonies so does acting with integrity before all people. George Caird aptly defines gentleness in this context: "It is that considerate courtesy and respect for the integrity of others which prompts a man not to be forever standing on his rights." Gentleness doesn't mean that we allow people to trample viciously upon us while remaining silent, but it means that we are to respond to others in a respectful way that demonstrates integrity and love. When someone engages in a dispute with us, for example, we don't have to have the last

word or get in a zinger, but rather we should discuss the issue and treat them with respect—something that many secular debaters don't do. Jesus certainly had arguments with Pharisees where he exposed their fraudulent actions and poor theology, but He didn't do so in a way that demeaned them ([2 Cor 10:1](#)). When we have joy and a gentle spirit, people will recognize that we belong to Christ because they will see a big difference in our testimony and that of the secular world around them.

In what ways can we demonstrate gentleness to others?

Question
4

In Reference



George Caird, Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, p. 150.

Philippians 4:6-7

GUARD AGAINST ANXIETY:

In [Phil 4:6-7](#), Paul discusses the cure for worry or anxiety: prayer. Literally, when he pens **be anxious for nothing**, the way the expression is constructed in the Greek means to “stop worrying.” The Philippians, like us, have many things in their lives which caused them to worry. Not only are they worried about Paul as their partner in ministry, but they are also experiencing the same conflict in their own lives ([Phil 1:30](#)). They are worried about their friend Epaphroditus because he became gravely ill on his way to help Paul in Rome ([Phil 2:26-27](#)). Disunity and bickering

had infiltrated their church ([Phil 4:2-3](#)). For the most part the Philippians were not wealthy, but they like Paul at times struggled to provide the basics for their families—food, clothing, and shelter ([Phil 4:11-12](#)); in fact, Paul notes in [2 Cor 8:2](#) that they gave out of “their deep poverty” to help the famine-stricken Jerusalem church.

Undoubtedly, if Paul were writing to many of us today, he would offer this same advice: stop worrying. We live in a world of uncertainty—politically, culturally, and economically. Today, we fear for the safety of our families in a world of turmoil and violence; we fear financial problems that could arise at any moment with the loss of a job, natural disaster, or indebtedness; we fear for the health of our friends and family and being able to afford even the most basic healthcare.

At what times do you feel most anxious or worried?

Question
5

We experience anxiety most frequently when we have the wrong perspective; we look at a stressful situation in terms of what we can do rather than turning to God and trusting in what He can do. We may say that we trust God, but our actions indicate otherwise. For instance, many of us have been in the passenger seat with someone learning to drive. Technically, we have no



control over the vehicle; we can't steer or push the brake. When something goes awry with the driver, sometimes we try to jerk the wheel and steer the car to safety, but it often ends by making the situation worse. To some degree, we do this with God; we invite Him into the driver's seat of our lives and then when things get tough we try to take control and grab the wheel making things worse. God, however, is not inexperienced in the things that we face in life, but He knows what's best for our lives.

The cure for anxiety is **prayer**; we aren't only to pray when things get tough, but rather we are to pray **in everything** ([v. 6](#)). How can we build a relationship with God based on trust if we only come to Him when the situation is dire and we need something immediately? Instead, we should offer **thanksgiving** to God when we see Him work in our lives, but we also ought to **let our requests be made known**—not as a last resort, but through a loving relationship in which we trust God to guide us and meet our needs. There is no magic formula for reducing anxiety; we don't have ten steps to a worry-free life, but what it boils down to is our perspective: do we trust God and seek Him or do we trust human means more ([Matt 6:25-34](#))?



When we trust **God**, His supernatural **peace will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus** ([v. 7](#)). This is not an external peace whereby we are free from distress, turmoil, or even persecution, but rather internal peace which helps us to see the final picture: God has won and victory is assured. He has offered us a share in that victory if we have a relationship

Instruct

with His Son. Jesus experienced tremendous stress on the night before His crucifixion so much that His sweat became as drops of blood, but Jesus saw the bigger picture and didn't let anxiety or stress dictate what He had come to do ([Luke 22:44](#)). If we would only trust God and seek Him in prayer, God would help us to endure difficult times by focusing on the larger picture of His grace and glory.

In what situations have you ever experienced the peace of God?

Question
6

Philippians 4:8-9

GUARD YOUR MIND:

Guarding the mind actually represents the most prominent principle to heed in [4:1-7](#) because if we fail to protect our minds then we will have major problems in being unified, maintaining our testimony, and ridding ourselves of anxiety. In [verse 7](#), Paul noted that through prayer God would grant us a **peace** which would **guard** our **hearts and minds**. In [verses 8-9](#), he explicitly lays out a plan which would help us to **guard** our **minds**; he begins by listing all the areas on which we must **meditate** ([v. 8](#)). In order to maintain a pure heart and act with integrity, we need to watch on what we focus with our minds. What we consume by watching, reading, or doing ultimately influences what we think; therefore, we need to monitor diligently what we put into our minds ([v. 10](#)).

Paul lists seven areas in which we must guard our minds; they can be summarized into three categories: 1) truth, 2) morality or virtuousness,

and 3) worship. In order to judge whether an action is moral or immoral we need to comprehend **the things that are true**. Our society has tried to redefine truth and claim that it depends upon the eye of the beholder; our society has attempted to redefine life, marriage, gender, love, and many other concepts ([Rom 1:22-23](#)). Truth, however, doesn't depend upon what others may say, but upon how God has created the world from the beginning. The truth, therefore, helps us to know and practice the things that are **noble, just, pure, lovely**, and of **good report**. For this reason, we are called not only to meditate on these things, but to apply them in our daily walk; thus, Paul encourages us to **do these** and God will give us **peace**. When we know and practice the truth, we can dwell upon the things that worship the Lord—**those things which are praiseworthy**. When we do these things, we will have a perspective that reflects the Lord and helps us to guard against the advance of the enemy in our lives.

Why is it important to guard our minds?

Question
7

Inspire

This week we learned about the importance of finding protection through the Word to guard our conduct so that we reflect the character of Christ; therefore, we need to guard ourselves in four distinct areas: 1) against disunity, 2) our testimonies, 3) against anxiety, and 4) our minds. As a soldier of Christ in a world that is opposed to His righteousness and often persecutes those who stand for the truth, we need to be united together, putting aside our differences in perspective and being unified with a single

purpose. A military unit that doesn't see the overarching mission is weak and will fall, but in Christ we have great strength when we seek the good of the kingdom over personal preferences—we are not here to be pleased or even to please others, but we are here to glorify the Lord and have His same mind. Therefore, we need to take great measures to guard what enters our minds. We need to know the truth so that it can help us determine what is holy or unholy and live a life that honors God and worships Him. Consequently, when we have the right perspective, we will act with integrity before all men and be anxious about nothing. What we consume with our minds, must reflect the glory and holiness of the Lord so that we can honor Him by how we conduct our lives. We must ask ourselves then: Are you like a well-trained British guard who stands ready without distraction to carry out his duty or are you like a guard who allows the thief to sneak in while on duty because our mind has wandered and we have become distracted from our duties?

In Prayer



Spend time in prayer asking God to guard your heart and mind, giving you Christ's perspective so that you can be even more effective in the ministry to which God has called you.

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Hopefully, you didn't get into any spirited debates this week about personal preferences, but if we are honest probably in the recent past we have gotten into a discussion with someone in this manner—it's human nature. If you had such a discussion, how did you respond? In what ways could you have demonstrated gentleness or in what ways did you display it?

We all have anxieties or worries about something in our lives. Take a moment to write them here—be specific and not just general. God wants you to have an intimate relationship with Him. Spend time in prayer, asking God to guide you and give you peace. Turn these worries over to God and trust Him to meet your needs.

Think about the things that you consumed mentally this week whether through conversations with others, what you read in books, magazines, or online, or what you saw on television or in the movies. How did they honor God? If they didn't in what way do you need to change what

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your mind consumes. Be honest with yourself—this is between you and God. In order to have a fuller relationship with Him we must confess our weaknesses and ask for strength.

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