

# PHILIPPIANS



FROM SORROW TO JOY

**SO THIS IS MY PRAYER: THAT YOUR LOVE WILL FLOURISH AND THAT YOU WILL NOT ONLY LOVE MUCH BUT WELL. LEARN TO LOVE APPROPRIATELY. YOU NEED TO USE YOUR HEAD AND TEST YOUR FEELINGS SO THAT YOUR LOVE IS SINCERE AND INTELLIGENT, NOT SENTIMENTAL GUSH. LIVE A LOVER'S LIFE, CIRCUMSPECT AND EXEMPLARY, A LIFE JESUS WILL BE PROUD OF: BOUNTIFUL IN FRUITS FROM THE SOUL, MAKING JESUS CHRIST ATTRACTIVE TO ALL, GETTING EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD**

**— PAUL, PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11 (THE MESSAGE)**

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# USING THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to be holistically immersive.

## AS AN INDIVIDUAL

For this guide we're focusing on one simple practice around reading and reflecting on the Scriptures that goes beyond understanding the passage but creating space for the passage to speak into your daily life, struggles, and heart.

## WITHIN YOUR DNA GROUP

We recommend each person does the individual study on their own before getting together, then you'll start each week by sharing "highlights" or key questions you want to discuss as a group.

The session also includes reading the passage, and applying the truths of the Bible to your own heart before thinking through what obedience to that passage will look like.

We've included a "Helpful Aid" in each section that will provide insights into the text. This is intended to supplement and give extra linguistic, cultural, or modern context to the Scriptures.

## AS A MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Alongside this guide we have given missional community leaders outlines of how to spend your time together during this season that goes beyond discussions. In fact, there are very few discussion questions. What we really want to get at is *experiencing the passage in obedience*. For example, Philippians 1:3-11 is a lot about Paul's thankfulness for the believers in Philippi and so on that week your missional community will give attention to giving thanks for each person through an intentional experience.

# HOW PHILIPPIANS MEETS US

Ernest Hemingway said: “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.”

Is this the human experience? It certainly feels like it. Sure, there are holidays, vacations, and the glimmering moments at golden hour when your day at work was good and you're taking a nice walk and you think like Randy Newman, “I love LA.” But, those are fleeting moments when all of life has relented and you've patched together a few hours of good news. Mostly, *the world breaks everyone*. Sickness, depression, anxiety, relational brokenness, profound unfairness, rising costs and shortened budgets, friends moving away, projects being dropped, kids with physical, emotional, or cognitive issues reveal your own brokenness, parents that don't meet your expectation while feeling the weight of not meeting yours. *The world breaks everyone*.

Elections—what if he really runs again—what if they win—, violence, war, assault, crashing companies, and shifting expectations. Chaos. Turmoil. Dread.

In march this year Mirela and I were flying home from New York—a great trip filled with moments where you think: I love my life—when our plane experienced an electrical failure and we went from 30K feet to landing at the remote end of the Albuquerque Airport (where the national guard planes are stored). We spent the night in the airport before finally getting on a new plane the next day. We landed to discover Norah missed out on a dream of attending a school she was hoping to attend...Our sewer line collapsed and poop water filled our basement...a person stole our debit card information and ran up over 3K worth of charges directly from our bank account, in a part time job I have I was told that I could quit or continue by

raising the funds to pay myself (like getting fired), a neighbor yelled some racial stuff at me and threatened me while my kids were listening...I went to my chair in the office (my pipe smoking chair) and I wept. And I cried out to God...make the bad news stop....Hemingway (and probably many other voices in our culture) would just shrug and say: “the world breaks everyone, get over it”...

One of the great tragedies of the modern world is we've quit the pursuit of joy alongside sorrow. We've stopped seeking satisfaction amidst chains. I don't blame us. It makes sense historically..what else are you supposed to do after the carnage of world wars?

But the gospel. The message of Jesus. The gospel is shorthand for His Life, Death, Resurrection and the eradication of evil and the proliferation of grace across the world that gets within the hearts of humanity and raises us to life...not because we've done things, organized ourselves well, or fixed our problems...no, the gospel happens to us because God has decided to make the gospel happen to us. And as that grace gets within us...watch out. The world breaks everyone...But, I'm here to tell you and Paul's letter to the Philippians is here to tell you, alongside a whole cloud of saints from generation to generation, this: the Gospel satisfies—even in storms. The Gospel brings joy—not a joy from a sunset, a latte, or a well choreographed social calendar—but joy springing from an eternity centered on the goodness and grace of God.

I get it. You have questions on the viability of gospel joy.

Can my soul sing a hallelujah while I'm stuck? While I'm bound? While I'm uncertain on my next steps? When life isn't what I wanted? —through the Spirit and this piece of Scripture, you're going to hear, “yes, your hallelujah can be cried out in deep joy while everything else seems to be crumbling.”

Can we as a community stand in confidence while being sequestered to the margins in culture—not maliciously but discarded like a blade of grass being blown away by a gardener? Again, you'll hear the Spirit say, Yes. We can live an extraordinary life in the center of God's mission, not as a martyr, but as a content citizen of his kingdom.

Can we, as lonely as we feel, know a relational bond that exceeds social, financial, cultural barriers in short amounts of time? The Spirit says, Yes. There's a friendship that goes beyond liking the same thing and being at the same stage of life...and friendship that's based on a common hope and partnership in cosmic renewal.

I believe there are two fundamental questions being asked by our neighbors and our culture.

- 1) Is there anything worth hoping for to make the world and me better?
- 2) Is there anything that can make me happy beyond a fleeting hit of dopamine, a small bonus, a tiny award, a great TV show, or trip to Cancun? Is there anything like happiness that transcends these struggles? Joy in the oncology floor? Joy with a negative bank account? Joy after bullying? Or heck, even joy the night after the awards show when you feel like a fraud all over again?

Not only does the Letter to the Philippians speak profoundly to these questions we ask and seek in this moment, but I believe they speak to the questions our neighbors ask to and to the motivations we have in not only pursuing joy but also in leveraging our lives for the sake of the gospel moving forward into the lives of those around us.





# WEEK 1: PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2

**THEY WENT ON TO SPELL OUT IN DETAIL THE STORY OF THE MASTER—THE ENTIRE FAMILY GOT IN ON THIS PART. THEY NEVER DID GET TO BED THAT NIGHT. THE JAILER MADE THEM FEEL AT HOME, DRESSED THEIR WOUNDS, AND THEN—HE COULDN'T WAIT TILL MORNING!—WAS BAPTIZED, HE AND EVERYONE IN HIS FAMILY. THERE IN HIS HOME, HE HAD FOOD SET OUT FOR A FESTIVE MEAL. IT WAS A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: HE AND HIS ENTIRE FAMILY HAD PUT THEIR TRUST IN GOD; EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE WAS IN ON THE CELEBRATION.**

**ACTS 16:32-34 (THE MESSAGE)**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2 & ACTS 16:11-40

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: ORIGINS STORY

It's important to understand where this Church came from. It was born through the radical nature of God's mission directed and sustained by the Power of the Holy Spirit, taking place in hospitality, birthed out of chaotic choices we wouldn't choose, fueled by worship.

Philippi was a city formed as the Roman Empire's retirement plan for military leaders on the land of old battle fields and civil wars. First Alexander the Great's father (Philip) conquered it, then it was battle ground of first Brutus vs. Antony and Octavius (remember act V of Julius Caesar) and then Octavius battled Antony.

After all those civil wars, Octavius set up the province as a military center and Roman citizenship (which came with lots of privileges) was given to former soldiers who fought on both sides. In a master stroke of building loyalty to the empire, soldiers were given land, place, and prominence on their upward trajectory through Roman culture. It was in this city that this declaration about the Emperor began: "He is Lord and Savior" (Greek = Kyrios and Soter).

Philippi was a leading city in a region with deep history that produced a place of elaborate cultural institutions like theaters, sporting events, trade, and fierce commitment to the religion that was the "Roman Dream": that if you gave enough of yourself to the empire it would give you everything you ever wanted: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The small church that began in Lydia's business and housing complex not only began to transform lives within her industry, and within her influence, it also stood opposed to the religion of Caesar. Instead, she and her church declared: "Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior". That legacy of conflict, chaos, and struggle was not a beginning moment but an enduring reality of this growing and thriving church. The church was born within sorrow and sustained with joy. A slave girl is set free, Paul and Silas are flogged and beaten. While they await more beatings, they worship and praise God from the depths of a dungeon. When they are set free their jailor who held them captive is suddenly asking how he can be set free from the cult of roman and how he can join the movement of Jesus. The gospel kept moving forward.

Overall, the story make us question what we know about suffering, struggle, and hardship in the gospel. While we see barriers to an abundant life because of the culture or our circumstances, in Philippi chains are simply the backdrop to mission.

The same is true for us in Los Angeles. Circumstances around us are challenging. Financial worries, educational worries, safety, and all sorts of issues that come with living in the vibrant and beautiful city that we love. Many of our work, family, and neighborhood spaces can even seem staunchly opposed to the kingdom of Jesus and the gospel.

However, the way forward is the same, too. Philippi was. Church born and sustained through joyful worship, hospitality, and gentle confrontation of false hopes with the living hope of Jesus.

# DNA

## DISCOVER

Read Philippians 1:1-2 & Acts 16:11-40 together as a group

Q: What stood out to you as you did your own personal reading and study of these passages?

Q: Where do you think joyful worship comes from while in suffering and chaos?

## NURTURE

Q: What are your personal chains? What are your past struggles and suffering?

Q: How are you sustained by other people's joy, encouragement, and presence?

Q: What do you need from this group to pursue the gospel through circumstances today?

## ACT

Q: What opposition do you see the gospel in our city? In your life? In our community?

Q: What is the Spirit calling you into as a response to this reading?

## **WEEK 2: PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11**

***EVERY TIME YOU CROSS MY MIND, I BREAK OUT IN EXCLAMATIONS OF THANKS TO GOD. EACH EXCLAMATION IS A TRIGGER TO PRAYER. I FIND MYSELF PRAYING FOR YOU WITH A GLAD HEART. I AM SO PLEASED THAT YOU HAVE CONTINUED ON IN THIS WITH US, BELIEVING AND PROCLAIMING GOD'S MESSAGE, FROM THE DAY YOU HEARD IT RIGHT UP TO THE PRESENT.***

**— PAUL, PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5 (THE MESSAGE)**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What God has done/is doing/will do?

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## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

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## NERDY STUFF: GOSPEL CREATES COMMUNITY

The ancient world had many forms of letters that all came with unique styles and formats that could be easily recognized. You opened the letter and you instantly knew: “Oh, this is a letter of instruction from someone with authority like a boss or household leader” (biblical example: 1 and 2 Corinthians) , or “this is a business letter” ( biblical example: Philemon).

The letter to the church in Philippi is without question a friendship letter. Greek philosophy was fixated on friendship. To the Greeks and then the Romans, Friendship was the building block of all society. Cicero and Plutarch have entire essays on it. Aristotle committed a sizable portion of his writing to the topic and for him and all the philosophers who followed there were three kinds of friendships:

1. Friendship between virtuous people, whose relationship is based on affection, loyalty, and trust.
2. Friendship based on pleasure or enjoying the same thing and liking the same thing.
3. Friendship based on need, a purely utilitarian arrangement. (Aristotle thought this was the lowest form of friendship).

Interestingly, Paul and the Church in Philippi portray a unique fourth ideal of friendship: a relationship created by Christ that is a partnership in the gospel.

The friendship they have for one another is based on affection and loyalty: “I hold you in my heart” Paul writes, “Every time I think about you, I thank God for you.” They love one another because Jesus has loved them.

It’s also a friendship based on enjoying the same thing: “we are partakers in in the gospel”. They both really love Jesus and that binds them together. They’re both feasting on the same good news. And so, they are bound.

Lastly, it’s a friendship that is based on need. Paul is dependent on their care for him. Their prayers, their financial gifts, their practical gifts like blankets. Paul even it seems to have a great need to simply know they exist in the world. But the Church needs him, too. They need his prayers, his stories, his encouragement. Overall, they need one another as they struggle together and as they grow together in the gospel

and as both of them see the message of Jesus go out from their lives. They *need* one another. They are bound to another. *Partaker* is similar to the Zulu word made famous by Desmond Tutu: *Ubuntu*. Which means, I am because you are. You are because I am. We belong to one another.

All of this is what Paul means when he says, “We are partners or partakers in the gospel.” This is what Soma means when we say, “gospel community on mission”. Paul’s language is shorter, but we’re describing the reality that Jesus creates community that is filled with love for one another and a love for Jesus and a neediness and reliance on one another to both grow in maturity and to share the gospel.

This is the fourth kind of friendship: Christian community. It isn’t based on liking the same music, being the same age, having the same finances, or bargaining with one another. No, it’s based on Jesus’ grace of freely loving us, freely adopting us into his family, and powerfully sending us to love the world around us.

Lastly, Paul follows the format of greco-roman friendship letters by addressing his friendship with thankfulness and then goodwill or hopes he has for them. Paul’s thankfulness is to God because God is at work in them. Paul’s hope for them is that their love would grow bigger and bigger and produce a discernment in what is good and right.

How do we demonstrate our thankfulness and hopes for one another? Are we thanking God for those in our community? Are we pleading with God that they would understand more and more how much God loves them? What difference would that make in our relationships within our missional communities?

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 1:3-11 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've read on your own?

Q: What surprised or encouraged you as you read through each of the four questions?

### **NURTURE**

Q: What has friendship looked like for you in the past? Have you experienced "gospel friendship"?

Q: What are the barriers in your heart, story, and life toward this kind of friendship?

### **ACT**

Q: How do we demonstrate our thankfulness and hopes for one another? Are we thanking God for those in our community?

Q: Are we pleading with God that they would understand more and more how much God loves them?

Q: What difference would that make in our relationships within our missional communities?

# WEEK 3: PHILIPPIANS

## 1:12-18A

***I WANT TO REPORT TO YOU, FRIENDS, THAT MY IMPRISONMENT HERE HAS HAD THE OPPOSITE OF ITS INTENDED EFFECT. INSTEAD OF BEING SQUELCHED, THE MESSAGE HAS ACTUALLY PROSPERED.***

**— PAUL, PHILIPPIANS 1:12 (THE MESSAGE)**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18A

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

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4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

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## NERDY STUFF: THE MISSION

Do you typically think of mission as something God does, or something we do? Do you think of the mission of God as a separate element of the gospel?

The Catholic Church gifts us a grand picture of God's mission and how it operates. First, they give us the language, *Missio Dei*, Mission of God. They never refer to mission as something that belongs to the Church or to us, it's always God's. Second, the *Missio Dei*, is the visible outworking of what God wants: the world made new. The definition from Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, is very helpful for us:

*“The activity of mission is nothing else and nothing less than an epiphany, or a manifesting of God's decree, and its fulfillment in the world and in world history, in the course of which God, by means of mission, manifestly works out the history of salvation.”*

When Jesus announces the kingdom (or makes an epiphany) in Luke 4:14-21, he announces his purpose (or mission) in a way that might surprise us because it wasn't just souls, it was bodies he came to restore. In fact, his proclaiming of the gospel wasn't merely a reversal of spiritual curse, but also physical. He proclaimed the gospel through his words, his healing, his rebukes, his feeding, his parties, and his daily life.

In this passage Paul talks about the mission of God advancing through his imprisonment. Through the contours of his life that he didn't plan, didn't long for, and doesn't like. How does that happen? It happens because the Mission's is God and he will use anything to make his work of salvation happen.

Jesus will use any part of your story. Jesus will use any voice. Jesus will use any terrible circumstance to manifest his grace on the world around you.

What does that mean for us? It means mission isn't something additional to our life, it is our life. It means the questions we ask are not, “how can I do God's mission” but instead are, “What is God doing to advance the gospel through my life right now?” “How is God making himself known through this circumstance?” “How am I growing in confidence and boldness to both see the gospel and make it known?”



## **DNA**

Read Philippians 1:12-18a out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied it on your own?

Q: What surprised or encouraged you as you read through each of the four questions?

### **NURTURE**

It's really hard to see the gospel advancing through our lives. We need other people to notice it for us.

Q: How are you seeing the gospel advance in each others' lives?

Q: Paul also describes a growing confidence and boldness. Where do you think boldness would come from?

### **ACT**

Q: How do we do two things: 1, encourage each other to see how God is advancing the mission through our lives and 2, increase our boldness in the gospel in the city?



# WEEK 4: PHILIPPIANS

## 1:18B-26

***AND I'M GOING TO KEEP THAT CELEBRATION GOING BECAUSE I KNOW HOW IT'S GOING TO TURN OUT. THROUGH YOUR FAITHFUL PRAYERS AND THE GENEROUS RESPONSE OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST, EVERYTHING HE WANTS TO DO IN AND THROUGH ME WILL BE DONE. I CAN HARDLY WAIT.***

**— PAUL, PHILIPPIANS 1:21 (THE MESSAGE)**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 1:18B-26

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: DESIRE

The church in Philippi cannot be separated from chains. First, the chains of the slave girl, then the chains of Paul and Silas in the jail, then the opposition within the city. Lastly, Paul's prolonged imprisonment from which he writes this letter to a church dealing with all sorts of cultural opposition to Jesus.

Paul is finally nearing the years' long journey from cell to cell, from Jerusalem to Rome. All the while he's had a longing and dream to preach the gospel in that city and in the central corridors of power. Finally, he's there waiting on the opportunity to preach—not as a free man—but as a man in chains.

When he gets the opportunity, he's going to look Caesar and his court in the eye and say, "Jesus is the Lord and Savior". He'll say this to people who have given their lives in worship to the Roman empire, and the creed that Caesar is "Lord and Savior". Meanwhile the church in Philippi is doing the same and it's all so difficult.

Those are the chains. And yet, there is rejoicing and there is courage because any outcome is a good one. Maybe they'll be destroyed and get to be with Jesus now! Or maybe, they will stay and get to speak the good news about Jesus and care for one another. Either way, Paul says, "it is good and will turn out for my deliverance." Sounds very impressive. The stuff of super-hero Christians. Martyrs from long ago. Brave women and men we can't even comprehend who clearly have no issues and are impenetrable fortresses of faith.

Except, the language of this passage has more depth. Paul says he has a hope he won't embarrass himself and that he'll somehow be brave. It's the language of desire: "*I want*". He goes on to say he's conflicted. He doesn't know what he wants: life or death. But if he *had to choose* he would choose being with Jesus. We're getting access to the inner life of a person whose longing is simply for Jesus.

Ruth Haley Barton is often quoted in our church because she eloquently captures the journey and trajectory of a life lived in radical pursuit of the gospel and how that overlays with desire. She writes, "Desire has its own rhythms. Sometimes it ebbs and sometimes it flows. But in the end it is the deepening of spiritual desire and the discipline to arrange our life around our desire that carries us from the shallow waters of superficial human wanting into our soul's movement in the very depths of God."

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 1:18b-26 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What surprised or encouraged you as you read through each of the four questions?

### **NURTURE**

Q: What do you long for in your relationship with Christ? What do you desire out of life?

Q: Where is your heart in relation to Paul's example? So satisfied in Christ, death seems like a great reward and equally satisfied in participating in God's work in this present life?

### **ACT**

Q: What does obedience look like for you to this passage? What is the Spirit calling you to do with your desires?

# WEEK 5: FREE WEEK

***THEY DIDN'T SHUT ME UP; THEY GAVE ME A PLATFORM!  
ALIVE, I'M CHRIST'S MESSENGER; DEAD, I'M HIS PRIZE.  
LIFE VERSUS EVEN MORE LIFE! I CAN'T LOSE.***

**— APOSTLE PAUL**



# **WEEK 6: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30**

***LIVE IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU ARE A CREDIT TO THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST.***

***— PHILIPPIANS 1:27 (THE MESSAGE)***

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

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## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

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## NERDY STUFF: STRIVING

Striving means, according to dictionaries and Google, “*to make great efforts to achieve or obtain something or to fight vigorously for something*”. Depending on how old you are, the image you have of striving might be that of a 90s Disney movie dad, who’s got their beeper strapped to their side, is running around the city like a stressed out maniac, and is missing out on all the meaningful things of life—like his dog (Beethoven), his kids’ baseball game (Hook), Christmas itself (Jingle all the Way).

Within the church, we might think of striving in a negative light, too: you’re doing things in your own strength, you’re idolizing your career, you’re trying too hard. In fact, *our* picture of holiness seems to be the one who is effortless. And if something takes effort it’s probably wrong. If you’ve got to vigorously try something, it’s probably something you shouldn’t try. If God wants you to do something, it should be easy because he will empower you and make it easy for you.

When the disciples were caught in a storm and Jesus was asleep, Matthew says they were *striving against the storm*. They battled against it until Jesus awoke and calmed the sea. Striving must be bad.

Except in this passage Paul tells them to live a life worthy of the Gospel that entails both a standing firm (i.e. standing against winds) and to *strive*. Paul writes, make great efforts and have an extraordinary ambition.

There are two caveats.

One, it has to be side by side. They’re to strive *together*. We undertake the effort and ambition not as lonesome heroes but as a community of saints. The temptation is to strive alone. Paul says, have one singular mind. Be in it with your crew.

Two, the aim of all this striving is Jesus. It’s not for better logistical lives, or for a greater show at church, or even morality. It’s a fighting for faith in the gospel. It’s the ambition for more, more of Jesus. The hunger for deeper knowing of his gospel. The fighting against idols and false narratives of good news by beholding the greatest news in Jesus.

The outcome of the shared struggle and the side-by-side ambition in the gospel is lasting courage in the face of suffering when everything seems to be against hope and joy—together, we'll have it in abundance.

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 1:27-30 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What surprised or encouraged you as you read through each of the four questions?

### **NURTURE**

Q: What are your ambitions and striving? What have you strived for in your life? What did it feel like? What did it result in?

Q: What keeps you from striving side-by-side in the gospel with others? What tempts you toward isolation?

### **ACT**

Q: Are you open to fighting side-by-side for faith in this group? What commitment would it take? What courage would you need?

# WEEK 7: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

***IF YOU'VE GOTTEN ANYTHING AT ALL OUT OF FOLLOWING CHRIST, IF HIS LOVE HAS MADE ANY DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE, IF BEING IN A COMMUNITY OF THE SPIRIT MEANS ANYTHING TO YOU, IF YOU HAVE A HEART, IF YOU CARE— THEN DO ME A FAVOR: AGREE WITH EACH OTHER, LOVE EACH OTHER, BE DEEP-SPIRITED FRIENDS.***

***— PHILIPPIANS 2:1 (THE MESSAGE)***

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?



## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: COURSA ROMANA

All of the ancient Roman society pursued what was called the *Coursa Romana* or the Roman Rat Race where a family did everything they could to move up the strata of society and the family name could get increasingly elevated.

Everything was dictated by this cast system of going higher and higher. Seats at the theater, places at the baths or spas, all the way to names on buildings.

In fact, in a city like Philippi, they would have had a pillar with the names of the prominent families. The higher up the pillar, the greater your influence and significance.<sup>1</sup> How could you move up? By pushing other people down. By doing great things for the empire through military sacrifice, financial contributions, and through your own achievements.

Roman society was built on the assumption of upward mobility and people's hunger to do anything they could to achieve it. The Roman story was this: you're born into a low status, so you work hard to prove yourself, then you solidify your position, then you give what you can to move even higher until you're at the top. Then, you'll be celebrated and you'll be like a god and no one can tell you what to do. This was Julius Caesar's story of immortality, the first of the "Lord and Savior" emperors.

This was Roman glory.

That's the background of Philippians 2:1-11 as Paul not only challenges that narrative but replaces it with the work of Jesus.

The story of Jesus is different. Jesus starts in the heavenly places as God and surrenders all his status and position to become an empty servant—a commoner. Jesus submits obediently to the Father and dies. Then, from the bottom—the literal grave—he's raised up and exalted and worshiped.

The entire world and all of time kneels to Jesus and confesses that he alone is the king and Lord and it's all for God's glory. Jesus' name is above all other names. He's at the top. How did he get there? Through the bottom. Through death.

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<sup>1</sup> *Shared Leadership in the Early Church, Joseph Hellerman*

Jesus' story is the story we live in. We start on the bottom, but we're raised—not through our effort or even sacrifice—to have a seat at the highest table. This is the gift of the gospel. It isn't earned, it's given.

And so, we don't ambitiously look out for ourselves, but empty ourselves for the sake of others. United by the story of Jesus, we reject the narratives of this world and embrace the narrative of the Gospel.

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 2:1-11 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: How would you describe the "Coursa Angelina" of our city's pursuit of level jumping? What does it look like?

### **NURTURE**

Q: How does the "Coursa Angelina" draw you in? How do you get sucked into it?

Q: What is the story of Jesus interrupting your story? How has he been better than what the city offers?

### **ACT**

Q: How does the story of Jesus create humility and unity within you?

Q: How will that unity and humility get expressed in your life this week?

# WEEK 8: PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

***DO EVERYTHING READILY AND CHEERFULLY—NO BICKERING, NO SECOND-GUESSING ALLOWED! GO OUT INTO THE WORLD UNCORRUPTED, A BREATH OF FRESH AIR IN THIS SQUALID AND POLLUTED SOCIETY. PROVIDE PEOPLE WITH A GLIMPSE OF GOOD LIVING AND OF THE LIVING GOD.***

***— PHILIPPIANS 2:14 (THE MESSAGE)***

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: JESUS CHANGES US

Outside of Jesus, we are destined to self-help improvement projects. It's hard and exhausting work. Sometimes we see results, but rarely does it transform every part of us. The gospel promises to change you entirely. Jesus doesn't just bring you in, he makes you new along the way.

The gospel changes us into the image and likeness of Jesus. Paul tells us that this gospel change happens through God's will and work he is doing in our lives. It does not happen by keeping our eyes on our failure.

The gospel frees us to admit our failures, because our worth doesn't hang on our success. Rather, our worth hangs on Jesus' success, his life over death, his victory over our sin.

We work out our salvation by confessing our sins without fear of judgment because Jesus has borne our judgment for us. As a result, for every look at sin we should look ten times at Christ—where we are reminded that Jesus is our forgiveness and acceptance before the Father. Jesus is worth beholding.

The gospel offers hope because it gives us the eyes to behold Jesus as well as the power to become like him. The power for gospel change is the person of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit turns our eyes away from sin and toward our Savior. Because of the Spirit, we are transformed into the image of Jesus' glory:

“Beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” —2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Becoming like Jesus is a life-long endeavor. This is why Paul mentions that we are changed “from one degree of glory to another.” Our change is incremental and progressive. If we continue to look to Jesus, we will inevitably become like him.

In summary, imperfect disciples cling to a perfect Christ while being perfected by the Spirit. Gospel change isn't perfection overnight but perseverance over a lifetime. What's the result? We're glimmers of hope in a dark world. We're billboards of what God does within a human life.

And so we rejoice and we're glad because Jesus is faithful to complete all the work he starts within us.



## **DNA**

Read Philippians 2:12-18 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What does it mean for God to be the one to provide both the will (desire) and to work for his good pleasure in your salvation?

### **NURTURE**

Q: Do you want to see yourself changed? What do you think Jesus needs to change within your life?

Q: Do you do things with grumbling and complaining? How does that steal joy?

### **ACT**

Q: Think about all the tasks and activities you have coming up in your week. How might God work to make you light among the chaos?

## **WEEK 9: PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30**

***MOST PEOPLE AROUND HERE ARE LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES, WITH LITTLE CONCERN FOR THE THINGS OF JESUS. BUT YOU KNOW YOURSELVES THAT TIMOTHY'S THE REAL THING. HE'S BEEN A DEVOTED SON TO ME AS TOGETHER WE'VE DELIVERED THE MESSAGE.***

**— PHILIPPIANS 2:23**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

This week is a bit different.

In this passage, we see the stories of two people who have sickness, missed dreams, and incredible value for the church. They are gifts from God. Spend this week studying how gifts work within the body and what role you play within your community.

In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about five gifts (or giftings in people), that Jesus has given the church. The reality is, God has given you as a gift to the church and he has formed you as a gift to this world and His mission within this world.

Read Ephesians 4:1-13

Q: What do these gifts tell us about God?

Q: What are we called to do as the body of believers?

Q: What unifies the Christian community?

Q: What are the gifts God gave the church?

These gifts are people. Gifts are grace from God, secured by the gospel. Could be talents, perspectives, stories, etc. that become animated by being in Christ and in his body. They are used to build up the body of Jesus. They are given to bring maturity, unity, and growth. Everyone plays a part in that.

The gifts are also about the good news of Jesus advancing into the world. In fact, when we talk about Spiritual gifts and we don't talk about mission it gets weird. What's the point if it isn't about the kingdom of God advancing in our lives and through our lives?

Remember, we're sent. Remember, we're sent like Jesus. Remember, we're sent with gifts.

## **CAVEATS**

Before we dive into each of the gifts, there are a few caveats.

1. This doesn't define you. You aren't being put in a box.
2. There are more roles than these, you are a gift to the church in many more ways than these! Other ways you may serve and build up the body: hospitality, leadership, mercy, administration, prophecy, words of knowledge, healing, etc.
3. We don't opt out of obedience, community, mission, or evangelism because it isn't our 'thing.' As Christians, as we grow up in Christ, we actually begin to grow in many areas. For example, while Paul is primarily an apostle, we see him instructing like a teacher, rebuking like a prophet, proclaiming the gospel like an evangelist, and caring for people like a shepherd.
4. All gifts are concerned with people, exist to make disciples, care for the poor, and love the church—their perspective on how to do those things are different.
5. All of these gifts are represented in Jesus and given by Him. He is the head of the body and has given us these gifts to point people to Him and bring people into reconciliation, peace, joy, and love.

## NERDY STUFF: THE 5 GIFTS

For each gift, we're going to define them, describe them, and give examples.

### **APOSTLES: "WANT THE GOSPEL TO ADVANCE."**

Description: Pioneers, Starters, Catalysts. Some go to new places and break new ground, others go to old places and pioneer in re-shaping or re-forming what already exists. They break new ground for new communities to form, care for leaders, and like to be sent out and send others out.

Examples: Peter, Paul, Apollo, Silas, Phoebe, Ruth.

What Apostles look like: People who jump around a bunch, feel comfortable in new environments, don't like to settle down, have lots of connections across cultures and contexts. Entrepreneurs, Frontiersmen, Explorers, Inventors.

### **PROPHETS - "WANT THE GOSPEL TO BE OBEYED."**

Description: Truth speakers who call people to worship God, leave idols, seek Jesus, seek the truth. The people that say: "This is not how we are supposed to act and be: Look to Jesus." They call people to repentance, holiness, faith, and belief. They regularly say: "Remember who God is and what he's done, let's repent and remember who we are in Christ and walk in his ways."

Examples: John the Baptist, James, four daughters of Philip, Deborah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses.

What Prophets look like: High sense of right and wrong, usually opinionated, cause driven, passionate about truth. Can easily see people who aren't being 'genuine'. Comedians, activists, artists, rappers, and musicians are often prophetic.

### **EVANGELISTS - "WANT THE GOSPEL TO BE KNOWN."**

Description: They are passionate about speaking the good news to everyone (believers and unbelievers). They like it and share it naturally and often with others. They are able to make the good news understandable and clear to people in their context and in their circumstances.

Examples: Priscilla, Joana, Mary, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul, Miriam.

What evangelists look like: High WOO, they can talk to people about anything. If they are excited about something, they tell people about it and invite them to participate in it, too. Sales people, story-tellers, influencers, and generally anyone who is always telling you about the show you must watch, restaurant you should try, gadget you need—they're probably an evangelist.

## **SHEPHERDS - "WANT PEOPLE TO BELIEVE THE GOSPEL."**

Description: These folks care about people's hearts, their emotional health. They want to bring people to the truth and isn't just a matter of caring about people's feelings—they want to see healing within their hearts. They care for people in their mess by pointing them to who God is and what he has done. They are focused on people's affections, wounds, and beliefs. They also tend to remain in one place for long periods of time committed to the same group of people.

Examples: John, Phoebe, David, Timothy, Titus.

What Shepherds look like outside of Christ: Care for people's feelings, empathetic to people's struggles, people often share their stories and struggles with these folks. They listen well. Counselors, advisors, etc.

## **TEACHERS - "WANT PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL"**

Description: They want people to know the vastness of the truth about God. They are able to make the Bible understood and applicable. They have an ability to explain difficult things to understand. They teach deep truths of the gospel.

Examples: Writer of Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, and Luke

What teachers look like: They are always able to explain difficult things to people. You walk away from them feeling smarter and more educated. They like to learn, too. They have good analogies, images, diagrams, and are able to empathize with their listeners in such a way that a difficult thing is understandable. They help people understand anything. Teachers, writers, instructors, and journalists often have this gifting.

## **PROCESS**

Q: What gifts do you see in others in your community and DNA group?

Q: How do you receive them?

Q: Do you see yourself as a gift to your community?

Q: Which of these gifts connect to you and how you approach things in life?

Q: How have you seen that gift in community?

Q: What is scary/nerve wrecking about leaning into that gift more?

Q: What happens when you use your gifts for your own strength, strategies, agenda?

## DNA: GIFTS PROCESSING

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Gifts need to be affirmed, challenged, and encouraged in community. Take this week’s DNA time to talk through your gifts.

- If someone feels lost and unsure, reflect about them and what you’ve seen in them.
- If someone might be off-course, gently share what you think their gifts might truly be.
- Spend time imagining how their gifts might encouraged, build up, or grow the community.
- Challenge each other to use their gifts not for themselves but for the kingdom.



# WEEK 10: PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

***THE VERY CREDENTIALS THESE PEOPLE ARE WAVING AROUND AS SOMETHING SPECIAL, I'M TEARING UP AND THROWING OUT WITH THE TRASH—ALONG WITH EVERYTHING ELSE I USED TO TAKE CREDIT FOR. AND WHY? BECAUSE OF CHRIST. YES, ALL THE THINGS I ONCE THOUGHT WERE SO IMPORTANT ARE GONE FROM MY LIFE.***

***— PHILIPPIANS 3:7***

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: THE MAIN THING HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE

What you are doing with Jesus—his identity, teaching, life, death, resurrection, and mission—is the main thing happening in your life. Whether you acknowledge him or not, whether you're wrestling with him or not, Jesus is what your life is all about. The historical claims Jesus makes about himself propose a reality that dominates our existence in one direction or another.

Award winning novelist, Barbara Kingsolver, summarizes, probably accidentally, the challenge of Jesus:

*“The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.”*

Kingsolver highlights a well kept secret: life doesn't function without hope. Our primal humanity beckons us to long for a horizon that will bring a new day. It is survival. Hope steers our lives from morning to evening, from month to year—from birth to death. Who do I want to be? Where should we go? How should I live? What do I want? How should I spend my life? What should I buy? Who do I vote for? How do I want you to behave? What should I eat? Who should I love? All these questions find answers only in our hope.

We inherit most of our hope from family, steal it from friends, or absorb it from those around us. Unexamined hope will spend your life. The least you can do is figure out what you hope for.

Hope is both the things you long for and the means by which they will come to fruition.

In this passage, Paul is saying he's tried all the things and accomplished all that can be accomplished, and it's all garbage compared to the power of Jesus—His Resurrection. And now, he says: that's steering his life. His aim is resurrection. No other hope will do.

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 3:1-11 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What does it mean to have confidence in the flesh/your resumé?

### **NURTURE**

Q: Paul gives a highlight reel of his value and work. What are the things you look back on to prove your value?

Q: How does it compare to the value Christ gives you?

### **ACT**

Q: What have you been doing with Jesus lately? Where have you looked for or hoped in that could make you well?



# WEEK 11:PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

***I'M NOT SAYING THAT I HAVE THIS ALL TOGETHER, THAT I HAVE IT MADE. BUT I AM WELL ON MY WAY, REACHING OUT FOR CHRIST, WHO HAS SO WONDROUSLY REACHED OUT FOR ME. FRIENDS, DON'T GET ME WRONG: BY NO MEANS DO I COUNT MYSELF AN EXPERT IN ALL OF THIS, BUT I'VE GOT MY EYE ON THE GOAL, WHERE GOD IS BECKONING US ONWARD—TO JESUS. I'M OFF AND RUNNING, AND I'M NOT TURNING BACK.***

**— PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?



## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: WE ARE MADE CHRIST'S OWN

Perhaps there was a time people truly believed something could change us and our world. But our cynicism denies it.

We don't believe our careers can save us. We don't believe families can give joy. We don't expect pleasure to fulfill us. We're cold to any appeal to place trust in these things. The greatest hindrance to embracing the hope of Jesus is our belief that there's nothing that can transform us. Nothing works. Jesus is no different.

It all sounds good. But we've learned to resist such appeals. As John Lennon sang, "Nothing's going to change *my* world."

Jesus cannot simply be good talk, or even good action on the cross. We need to see and know Jesus himself change *us*. If he doesn't and if he can't, what's the point?

What if I am who I am? This is me, and nothing works. I cannot change.

At the seven year mark of my marriage, I was exhausted. Not from work, busy calendars, or strenuous activity. Fatigue from the droning hum of a soul unmoved, unshifted, unaltered. I wasn't the partner I needed to be.

'What if I am who I am?' is the haunting echo of internal doubt. We aren't trying to change the world. We're trying to change ourselves.

I've taken slow walks around rehab centers, spoken on the phone with friends just out of jail after a night of regret. I've wept with people over their battles with anger, anxiety, and loneliness. We live in a time of great pain. The greatest pain is the sense that it is all inevitable.

There's no freedom from guilt. No way out from shame. No path forward except to put our efforts into career, mitigate familial disasters, and carve an identity into our ethos we know is pseudo at best and completely false at worst.

If you're going to cross the divide of cynicism to belief you will need a resolution to these questions: Does Jesus transform *me*? What can the good news of Jesus do within my bones? Can the good news be good news if it is only cosmic, only theological?

This gospel claims to not only change the world but also to change you. Christianity is not merely a belief but an experience. Each doctrine and theology is not

describing a cosmic mechanism, but an experience: freedom, forgiveness, grace, healing, love, inclusion. These are all doctrines of experiencing Jesus.

The biblical language for transformation is *becoming*. Jesus, indwelling the lives of those who experience his good news proclamation, causes us to *become*. He makes us. It's not an upgrade to an existence, it's a bringing us into true existence. He molds. He shifts. He heals. Become what?

Paul says, "Jesus Christ has made me his own" and so he "leaves everything behind and strains to that aim". In summary he says, "I'm not perfect, but I belong to Jesus. And that is everything."

And so, he says, let's hold onto that identity as the treasure of life and God gives us freedom, frees us from guilt, overcomes our shame, and brings us into the center of his kingdom.

## **DNA**

Read Philippians 3:12-16 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What are all the things you've received in Christ when you were made his? (Think about the whole of the Bible)

### **NURTURE**

Q: Who are you? Who do you belong to?

Q: What would change in your life if you believe the highest identity and aim is to belong to Christ?

### **ACT**

Q: How do you hold onto what you've attained in Christ?

# WEEK 12: PHILIPPIANS

## 3:17-4:1

***BUT THERE'S FAR MORE TO LIFE FOR US. WE'RE CITIZENS OF HIGH HEAVEN! WE'RE WAITING THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAVIOR, THE MASTER, JESUS CHRIST, WHO WILL TRANSFORM OUR EARTHY BODIES INTO GLORIOUS BODIES LIKE HIS OWN. HE'LL MAKE US BEAUTIFUL AND WHOLE WITH THE SAME POWERFUL SKILL BY WHICH HE IS PUTTING EVERYTHING AS IT SHOULD BE, UNDER AND AROUND HIM.***

**— PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21**

# PERSONAL READING AND FORMATION

## PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 3:17-4:1

### HOW AM I DOING?

What is on the top of your mind? What worries, concerns, or struggles are you bringing? How *are* you? Write these things down.

### ASK THE SPIRIT TO SPEAK

Calm your body and mind, pray a short prayer asking the Spirit to speak through the text, and sit in silence for a minute or two. Then read the passage and answer the questions below.

2. What has God done/is doing/will do?

1. Who is God?

3. Who am I?

4. How do I live?

## **APPLY THE GOSPEL TO YOUR LIFE**

How does the gospel and passage connect and speak into the struggles and concerns in your life (that you might have even shared earlier)? How does the gospel enter your story, today?

## **LISTEN AND RESPOND**

What is the Spirit saying to you? What does it look like to trust and believe Jesus in light of this passage? What does living within the gospel look like?

## **PRAY FOR OTHERS**

End your time praying for whoever the Spirit brings to mind.

## NERDY STUFF: DOUBLE AGENTS

During World War II, France was occupied by the Nazis. They drove their tanks right through Paris and all seemed lost. They brought their terror and their totalitarianism. Generals took over palaces. Armies took over homes. They tried to beat the French into submission. France was no more. Except some people never agreed to that. They refused to relinquish their citizenship to France. It was in them. They were French and borders and wars had no impact on that. They formed the Resistance. They made everything difficult. They spied on their occupiers. They broke trains, tore down bridges, spoiled food, cut telephone wires. They were subversive.

We live in two kingdoms: the Kingdom of America and the Kingdom of God. The Philippians lived in the Empire of Rome and the Kingdom of God. However, it's clear where our citizenship lies and who our king is. This passage says we're double agents. Citizens of Heaven living behind enemy lines. C.S. Lewis said it this way:

“Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”

What is the sabotage? How do we build the kingdom? By imitating Christ. It's through the subversive act of rejecting performance and embracing grace. It's through the work of love over hate. Peace over fighting. Rest over Burnout. It's hospitality over control. It's generosity over consumerism. These are the tools of the double agent, the Christian in this world.



## **DNA**

Read Philippians 3:17-4:1 out loud as a group.

### **DISCOVER**

Q: What does this passage say? How have you understood this passage as you've studied on your own?

Q: What is a citizen of heaven? What is the kingdom of heaven like? What is the king like?

### **NURTURE**

Q: How is the kingdom of this world discouraging you these days?

Q: How is the brokenness and the "enemies of Jesus' way" bringing you to lament?

### **ACT**

Q: How do you live as a "double agent"?

