

Introduction to Discipleship Explored

Aim: To introduce the importance of discipleship and the book of Philippians.

Discipleship

We all know that Jesus' followers were called disciples, but what does "disciple" mean?

The Greek word for *disciple* means learner; ie, a person who comes under a teacher/leader. Not only do they learn from their teacher, but they seek to follow him and become like him; eg, like an apprentice.

Although the term is not used much, if we are a Christian, we are a disciple of Christ (cf. Acts 9:10,26,36). What's some of the requirements that Jesus stipulated if we wish to be His disciple?

Matt 10:24: we must come under Him and seek to be like Him

Matt 16:24-25: we must deny ourselves (give up our life) and follow Jesus

Luke 14:26-27: we must put Jesus above all others, including those closest to us

How do you go matching up to Christ's standard on discipleship?

Unlike Jesus' disciples, who could physically walk with Him and hear Him, what must we do?

To be a disciple of Jesus we must spend time with Him; we do that by reading His Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us, as well as by praying to our God through Jesus. This enables us to listen to Jesus, walk with Jesus and follow Him. This requires discipline. How disciplined are you? [discuss]

Note the similarity between the words *disciple* and *discipline*.

Much of the New Testament may be considered "teaching in discipleship". [discuss]

The apostles of Jesus (like Paul) gave much teaching to the church. In essence, through Christ's Spirit, they have given us Christ's teaching so that we can follow Him and serve Him; ie, be a disciple of His.

Introduction to Philippians

One of the many New Testament books that has been given to help Christians grow in Christ is the book of Philippians. This series *Discipleship Explored* is based on this book. Let us consider its background.

Who are the Philippians? (Acts 16:11-40)

They are a group of Christians who came to trust in Jesus Christ after Paul's second missionary journey. They lived in an important and leading city in the district of Macedonia in the Roman empire. This was where Lydia and the Philippian jailer were converted. The Christians were persecuted there.

What else do we learn about the Philippian Christians? (Acts 20:1-6; 1 Thess 2:1-2)

On Paul's third missionary journey he revisited many cities, including Philippi, and there he gave much exhortation, as they were being severely tested for the faith (Acts 20:2).

In the light of what the Philippian Christians were experiencing, what do you think is one of the main purposes of the book of Philippians?

Paul wrote to encourage them. As we shall see, He encourages them to be confident and content in Christ. He also encourages them to continue to follow Christ and to rejoice in Him.

What is so remarkable about Paul encouraging the Philippian Christians? (Phil 1:12-14; 4:21-22)

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter (many believe he was in prison in Rome), Yet, he took the time to encourage other Christians, as well as to rejoice that his "chains" furthered the Gospel.

Paul's letter to the Philippians not only gives us encouragement but also words of instruction in being a disciple of Christ. What are some of the memorable instructions you may recall?

Abound in love (Phil 1:9); conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Phil 1:27); imitate Christ's humility (Phil 2:1-8); shine as lights in a crooked world (Phil 2:14-15); press on to lay hold of Christ (Phil 3:12-15); rejoice always (Phil 4:4) and think pure thoughts (Phil 4:8)

Memory verse: Each week we will learn a memory verse. Consider Psalm 119:11 "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You". This week's memory verse is Philippians 1:6 –

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (NIV)

Discuss why this verse is such a blessing. (Note: you will be expected to quote it next week)

Summary: As a disciple of Christ, let God's word encourage you to faithfully follow Christ.

Discipleship Explored - Episode 1 Confident in Christ (Phil 1:1-11)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 1:6 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *Who wrote Philippians, and from where did he write it?* Paul wrote Philippians, and he wrote it while he was imprisoned for the Gospel (probably in Rome under house arrest).

What is one of the main purposes of the letter? Besides thanking them for their gift, Paul encourages them, as well as instructs them in how to be a faithful disciple of Christ.

Read: Read together Philippians 1:1-11

Play DVD: **Episode 1 - Confident in Christ (10 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions arising from this week's episode.

What does Paul describe him and Timothy to be? What does this mean? (v.1)

Paul and Timothy were bond-servants of Christ Jesus; ie, they were willing and devoted servants of Jesus. He was their master and they had given up all their rights in order to live for Him (cf. Matt 16:24).

Who are "saints"? What does this term imply? (v.1)

Every genuine Christian is a saint; not just a few special people that a church might declare to be. "Saint" means "set apart one". When we trust in Christ, we are "set apart" from the world to be God's children.

Consider Paul's blessing for the Christians at Philippi. What do these words mean for you?

In Christ Jesus, these are not just a nice wishful thought – they are a reality when we walk with Him.

What attitude do we see in Paul's heart toward the Philippian Christians? (vv.3-4, 7-8)

Paul loves them: he thanks God for them, he remembers them, and longs for them with Christ's affection.

What attitude do we have toward other believers? Do we love them with the affection (love) of Christ? Look up 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:20-21 and discuss.

Why could Paul have confidence that they were genuine Christians? (v.5)

They were in partnership with, or participators of, the Gospel; that is, Paul could tell that they had not only responded to the Gospel as he preached it, but they also lived lives that showed that they were followers of Jesus; ie, their actions and attitudes showed that they had been born again.

Consider Lydia and the jailer in Acts 16. How did they show their "partnership" in the Gospel?

Upon trusting in Jesus, Lydia showed hospitality. The jailer, after believing in Jesus, washed Paul and Silas' wounds and he fed them. Do our lives show that we are in "partnership" with the Gospel?

In the light that Paul knew they were genuine Christians, what promise does he give in v.6?

God's work in them will continue until the day of Christ Jesus. We are His workmanship (Eph 2:10).

What do we learn from v.6 about God's work?

- It was God who already began a good work in us by bringing us to Christ (John 6:44).
- It is God who will continue to work in us until the final day (cf. Phil 2:13).
- The work is a good work, making us blameless and righteous(vv.10-11) - like Christ (Rom 8:29).
- God's work in us will be perfected when we see Jesus (cf. 1 John 3:2).

We sometimes feel that our sins and failures will cause God to give up on us. Is this true?

No! If we are a true Christian, God will continue to work in us despite our failures. He will not let go of us (John 10:27-30), and He will continue to perfect His work in us. Consider Jesus' words in John 6:37-40.

Discuss: "It's not us who holds onto God, but He holds onto us"; "What God starts He finishes"

Consider v.7. How does Paul view his imprisonment?

It was an occasion to defend and confirm the Gospel to those about him (see Phil 1:13). Do we look at our situations like that; especially when things are not pleasant?

What key things does Paul pray for them in vv.9-11?

Paul prays that they may grow in love through having knowledge and discernment that comes from God's truth. He also prays that this life of love may lead to a blameless and righteous life until Christ's return.

Why can Paul confidently ask this request of God, and what is the ultimate goal?

Paul knew that every believer, through Christ, has been filled with the fruit of righteousness. Thus, through God we can love. The goal is that our lives may bring glory and praise to God (cf. Matt 5:16).

Summary: Remember that God finishes what He starts; if you are in Christ, be confident that He will continue to work in you until you go to be with the Lord.

Memory verse: Philippians 1:21 – *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain (NIV)*

Discipleship Explored - Episode 2 **Living in Christ (Phil 1:12-26)**

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 1:21 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *Why was Paul confident that the Philippians were genuine Christians (cf. 1:5)? What does this mean?* The Philippians not only believed the Gospel, but they were in partnership with the Gospel; ie, they lived out the Gospel by coming under Christ and living for Him (eg, loving others).

For those who are genuine followers of Christ, what great assurance can we lean on? (1:6) We can know with certainty that God will finish the good work He has started for us who are in Christ.

Read: Read together Philippians 1:12-26

Play DVD: **Episode 2 - Living in Christ (10 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

The last part of the DVD challenges us to consider how our closest friend would complete this sentence for us: "for you, to live is . . ."? But how would our friend determine this? [Discuss]

They would consider what we love to spend our time doing, what we love to speak about, and what gives us the greatest joy in life,

In the light of this, what do we love spending time doing, what do we love to speak about, what is our greatest joy? Is it Christ? [Discuss the things that even Christians can be in danger of living for]

We can live for our family, our spouse, our children, our job, our Christian ministry, our home, etc. They may be good things, but we can live for and speak more about these other things, than Christ.

Let us now look at Phil 1:12-27 and consider how Paul's life showed that he lived for Christ.

In vv.12-13 what do the prison guards observe about Paul? Why is that?

The prison guards knew that Paul was in chains because of Christ; ie, for the Gospel of Christ. Not only that, but they knew Paul loved to speak of Christ even in chains (imagine being a guard chained to Paul).

Though in prison, what could Paul rejoice in? (vv. 12-18)

Paul could rejoice that the Gospel was advancing; ie, being shared with more people. Paul was able to preach to soldiers and rulers; timid Christians were made more courageous to preach through Paul's sufferings (v.14); others who despised Paul were preaching more, while he was waylaid in prison (vv.15-17).

Paul was in prison, facing uncertainty and possible death. What things may we consider important if we were in such a situation? [discuss]

What was the most important thing to Paul? (v.18) Why do you think that was the case? (Rom 1:16)

The most important thing was that Christ was preached. This is because the Gospel glorifies Christ, and also, it is the only means by which people can be rescued from their sins.

Despite the difficult circumstances of prison life, why could Paul be confident that he would continue to exalt Christ though his life (vv. 19-20)

Paul knew fellow believers were praying for him, but also, he had the help of the Spirit of Jesus to continue to exalt Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Note: The Holy Spirit is none other than the Spirit of Jesus (cf. also Rom 8:9).

How does Paul view death, for he had the prospect of being martyred for Christ? (vv.21-24)

Death was something to look forward to, for he knew he would be with Christ, and that was "better by far".

How do we view death? Do we look forward to it? Are we ready to die right now? Why or why not?

If we are living for the things about us we will not be so welcoming of death. Our view of death shows us who/what we are living for. Consider: "Those who truly live for Christ look forward to being with Him"

How did Paul view his life on earth (vv.22, 26)?

It was to be lived in declaring the Gospel to others, and building up believers for works of service.

What characterises a person's life who can say "for to me, to live is Christ", as seen in Paul?

Christ is everything. They long to be with Christ, and while here on earth, they love to share the Gospel of our Lord Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 2:2), as well as equip fellow believers so that they may serve Christ more fully. Does this characterise your life? Can you say "for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"?

Summary: **To live in Christ is to proclaim Christ's Gospel and to build up fellow believers.**

Memory verse: **Philippians 2:5-7a** *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. (NIV)*

Discipleship Explored - Episode 3 Standing Together in Christ (Phil 1:27-2:11)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 2:5-7a (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *What do we see from Paul's life that helps us understand the phrase "to live is Christ"?* (vv.12-14, 18, 25) Paul constantly proclaimed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus to all, rejoiced when others did the same, and helped equip fellow believers to progress in their faith in Christ (ie, live for Him).

For those who can say "to live is Christ", what is their view of death? Those who truly live for Christ desire to be with Christ. They see death as "great gain". They see being with Christ as "far better".

Read: Read together Philippians 1:27-2:11

Play DVD: Episode 3 – Standing Together in Christ (12 minutes)

Discuss the following questions.

We are challenged to "stand together in Christ". What's the benefit of this? (vv. 1:27-28)

It helps us to be united in supporting one another in the faith, and in strengthening each other to live out and proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus – despite persecution and opposition.

What does "standing together" practically mean? (1:27, 2:2)

It means, as Christ's body, that we are not divided, or fighting against each other, or having power struggles, etc. Instead, we are one; one in spirit, one in mind, one in love, one in purpose (cf. Eph 4:4-6).

What two things have been "granted" to us? (vv.1:29-30) [Discuss]

We have been granted to believe in Christ, as well as to suffer for Him; that is, our faith in Christ is a gift or privilege, but so also is our suffering for Christ. We are meant to see suffering as a blessing. Not only is it honourable to suffer for His name (cf. Col 1:24), but it shows that we truly belong to Christ.

Why shouldn't we be fighting each other? (vv.2:1-2)

Since we are so blessed by being in Christ, we ought not to struggle with each other, but be one. Others will oppose us and cause us to suffer, but in Christ we ought to stand together.

Although we are so blessed in Christ, what is the main danger to our unity?

Our main danger is pride and selfishness. Discuss: Augustine called pride "the mother of all sins".

In order to combat pride, what key things does Paul teach us to do? (vv. 2:3-4)

We are not to be selfish (demanding our rights and ways), but be humble and a servant to others. We are to consider fellow believers more important than ourselves, and are to consider their interests above ours.

What supreme example do we have in regard to living like this?

Paul gives the Lord Jesus as the perfect and supreme example of humility. We are exhorted to have the attitude Christ had when He came to earth and walked amongst us.

What impresses you about Christ's humility?

- Although He is God, He did not seek to force His equality with the Father; ie, grasp it.
- Although He is God, He denied Himself all His rights and became a human; and a slave at that.
- Although He is God, He obediently obeyed the Father and went to the cross, and died for us.

When we think back to the words in 1:27, what do you think it means to "conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ"?

It means that we are like Christ – selfless and humble, a servant to others, and obedient to God. Consider also Ephesians 4:1-3. What do we learn from that passage?

What is the result of living in this "worthy manner"? (v.1:27)

We won't be contending with each other from pride and selfishness, but instead, we will be contending for the Gospel in a world that is hostile to it, and supporting each other in this great task.

What was the result of Jesus' humility, according to 2:9-11?

God exalted Him to the highest place (He sits at the right hand of the Father), and one day all will acknowledge that He is the Lord – including those who oppose us and cause us to suffer.

What will be the outcome of our life if we would live in a manner worthy of the Gospel?

We will be assured of our salvation (1:28), and one day be exalted to where Christ is. (cf. 1 Peter 5:5-6)

Summary: **The secret of "standing together" is humility; our supreme example is Christ; our greatest enemy is not those who oppose us, but our pride and selfishness.**

Memory verse: **Phil 2:12b-13 Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose. (NIV)**

Discipleship Explored - Episode 4 Transformed by Christ (Phil 2:12-30)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 2:12b-13 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *Why does Paul urge Christians to “stand together” as one? (1:27-28)* This will help us to support and strengthen each other as we contend for the Gospel in a world that is hostile to Christianity.

What is our main enemy in “standing together” and being “one”? Our main enemy is pride and selfishness; not those who oppose us as we seek to share the Gospel.

How are we to overcome pride and selfishness? (2:3-8) We are to overcome these by being like Christ – selfless, humble & obedient to God. We are to consider Him and imitate Him (cf. Heb 12:2-3).

Read: Read together Philippians 2:12-30

Play DVD: **Episode 4 – Transformed by Christ (11 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

At the start of the DVD, the question is asked: “What’s more important: to tell people the Gospel of Christ, or to live a godly life?” What would your answer be? [discuss]

Both are equally important. A godly life alone won’t necessarily make people know that Christ is real (ie, they may conclude we are a Buddhist), but telling others about Jesus without living a godly life will cause people to dismiss our message and to think of us as a hypocrite.

How does God view the society we live in, and what are we meant to be like? (2:14-15)

We live in a “crooked and depraved” society; ie, people are in spiritual darkness, committing deeds of wickedness. But we are meant to be different, blameless and pure, like “stars”, shining Christ to others.

According to Phil 2:14-16, what does it mean to “shine like stars”? (cf. also Matt 5:14-16)

- Firstly, it means that we live a godly life – we don’t complain or grumble or argue, we seek to be blameless and pure instead of crooked and depraved, and we do “good works” to glorify God
 - Secondly, we “hold out the word of life”; ie, we tell others about the good news of our Lord Jesus
- Note the two elements of “shining like a star”: showing Christ’s character, and speaking of Him

In order to “shine like a star”, we are urged to “work out our salvation”. What does this mean?

It does not mean we are to work for our salvation, for our salvation does not depend on our works, but on Christ’s work at the cross. However, we are to “work it out” in the sense of making right choices and disciplining ourselves such that we become free from sinful living; ie, free from the power of sin.

We are called to “work out our salvation”, but what great truth do we have in 2:13?

Although we’re to do our part in living a righteous life, we’re encouraged to know that God works in us (cf. 1:6). He works on our will so that we desire to be righteous, and helps us in our actions to be holy. God’s will and His work is for us to be holy (1 Thess 4:3) and to be transformed in Christ (2 Cor 3:18).

What attitude are we to have as we “work out our salvation”? Why?

We are to work out our salvation with fear (reverence) and trembling. This is because God has saved us through Christ, and now we constantly dwell in His holy presence. How can we continue in sin and remain as we once were, and work against His transforming work in our lives?

Many so-called “Christians” live a double-life. What they are like in the presence of Christians is different to what they are like with others. What do we make of this in the light of Phil 2:12-16?

This is not to be. As we work out our salvation, with God working in us, our whole life should be transformed (our personality, our relationships, our thoughts, our speech, our actions), so that we shine Christ all the time, and everywhere. Is this true for us? Whether people are present or absent? (cf. 2:12).

Paul speaks of two people who serve as an example of those who truly “shine like stars”. Who are they and what do we see in their lives? (2:19-30)

Paul mentions Timothy and Epaphroditus. Timothy didn’t serve himself, but Christ and others, living out Phil 2:3-5. He was committed to the work of the Gospel (2:22). Likewise, Epaphroditus was selfless, humble, and cared for others before himself. He also was committed to the work of Christ (2:30).

Note: They both lived a godly life, and were active in declaring the Gospel – “shining like stars”.

Stars stand out against the blackness of space. Do we stand out? How different are we?

Summary: **Let Christ transform you so that you may “shine like stars in the universe”.**

Memory verse: **Phil 3:8 I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (NIV)**

Discipleship Explored - Episode 5 Righteous in Christ (Phil 3:1-9)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 3:8 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *What are we meant to be like as we live in a "crooked and depraved" society? (2:15)*

We are to be shining like "stars in the universe"; ie, shining in a spiritually dark world (cf. Matt 5:14-16).

How does one shine like a star? We do this by two things: living out Christ's life (being godly) and sharing the Gospel with others (holding out the Word of Life). They both must go together.

What are we to do, but what should encourage us? (2:12-13) We are to "work out" (not "work for") our salvation, becoming free from sin, yet knowing that it is God who works in us as we work.

Read: Read together Philippians 3:1-9

Play DVD: **Episode 5 – Righteous in Christ (11 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

What would you say if God were to ask you, "Why should I accept you and let you into heaven?"

Many people, including church-goers and people who believe they are Christians, say they have lived a good life: either morally and/or religiously. God "owes them" because they have tried to do the right thing.

What do we make of the following verses: Rom 3:9-10; Isa 64:6?

The Bible declares that no-one is righteous (acceptable to God) because of our sin. Even our so-called "righteous acts" are filthy rags; ie, they fall short of being a righteous act. This is because we often don't do our good deeds by faith (Rom 14:23) and for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31), but by our own standard.

Our greatest need is righteousness; not happiness or health or anything else. Why is that?

Without righteousness we are not right with God, and therefore will not find acceptance with God on the Day of Judgment. Instead, we will be turned away from heaven and suffer everlasting punishment in hell.

Paul could boast more than anyone else about living a "righteous life" (Phil 3:4-6). If anyone could be made acceptable to God by this way, Paul was the man. But what does he say? Why? (Phil 3:7-9) He considers all his so-called "righteous living" as loss, or as rubbish (excrement), because he knew that nothing he did could make him righteous (acceptable) to God, except faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel declares that we can be made righteous. How? (Phil 3:9; cf. also Rom 3:20-24)

We can be made righteous by God granting it to us as a gracious gift, if we would put our faith in Jesus.

Because of this glorious truth, consider the way Paul speaks of Christ in Phil 3:7-9? [Discuss]

- I consider (everything) loss for the sake of Christ – v.3:7
- I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus (v. 3:8)
- I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him (vv. 3:8b-9)

Paul wanted nothing more than Christ. Are you able to say the same?

In the light of these truths, Paul tells us in the previous verses to "watch out" for what? (Phil 3:2)

We are to watch out for those who seek to take away from the truth that faith alone in Jesus Christ makes us righteous. Some say it's "Jesus plus other things we must do", and still others continue to emphasise doing good works in order to be righteous before God. These are not only very wrong, but they take away from Christ's glory – He alone can make us righteous before a holy God, when we put our faith in Him.

How does Paul describe those who truly stand righteous in Christ? (Phil 3:2-3)

They worship God by His Spirit (they are born of His Spirit), they glory in Christ, and they put no confidence in the flesh; ie, they don't rely upon their righteous acts to be right with God. Paul is an example.

One of the great Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ is Jeremiah 23:5-6. What does it declare, and why should we rejoice?

It declares that the Christ would not only come from David's line, but that He would be the LORD (Yahweh) and that He would be "our righteousness"; ie, not only is He righteous Himself, but He would become our righteousness. This was through His atoning death for us, and His resurrection (Rom 4:25).

When do you feel confident that you are a Christian? When should you feel confident?

Many feel confident they are a Christian when they are doing God's will. It is good to please the Lord, but we always ought to be confident of our standing before God, because our right standing before God is not based on our works, but Christ's work for us. Cf. John Bunyan: "Our righteousness is in heaven".

Summary: **We stand acceptable to God through faith in Christ, for Christ is our righteousness.**

Memory verse: **Phil 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings. (NIV)**

Discipleship Explored - Episode 6 **Knowing Christ (Phil 3:10 - 4:1)**

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 3:10 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *Paul had an impressive résumé in regard to his moral and religious life, but what does he say about it in Phil 3:7-8? Why?* He considered it all rubbish in view of having Christ, for the things we do can never achieve righteousness before God. Only having faith in Christ can make us righteous.

What are we to constantly "watch out" for? (3:2) We are to watch out for those who seek to replace or add to the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ.

How does Paul describe the genuine Christian in Phil 3:3? Does this describe you? They worship God in the Spirit, they glory in Christ, and put no confidence in the flesh (in their self-efforts).

Read: Read together Philippians 3:10 – 4:1

Play DVD: **Episode 6 – Knowing Christ (10 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

Discuss: It's one thing to believe in Christ; it's another thing to know Christ. (Phil 3:8-10, 2 Tim 1:12) Many believe in Christ in the sense that they believe in the facts about who Jesus is and what He has done for them. A true Christian, however, is one who not only believes in Christ (based on the knowledge of the Bible), but they know Christ (cf. Matt 7:21-23), and want to know Him more; eg, like Paul did.

Why should we want to know Christ more? [Discuss]

We ought to want to know Christ more because of His love for us, for what He has done for us, and how He is our all in all (our righteousness). The Spirit of Jesus will also be prompting us to know Christ more.

According to 3:10, knowing Christ includes two things. What are they? What does this mean?

To know Christ means to know the power of His resurrection; ie, to experience the transforming power of the resurrected Jesus to make us like Him (Rom 8:9-11). It also means suffering for Him (cf. Phil 1:29-30).

What do you think it means to experience the "fellowship of His sufferings" (ie, suffer for Christ)?

It means having to deny ourselves and our sinful desires, being maligned and mistreated by people (including persecution) because of how we bear Christ's name, and experiencing the attacks of the evil one.

How well do you know Christ in the light of suffering for Him and being transformed by Him?

Discuss: "If we aren't being transformed by Christ and suffering for Him, then we don't know Him".

In 3:12-14, Paul expresses the goal of His life. What is it? What does he mean?

Paul's goal is to "press on" in order to win the prize for which God had called him heavenward in Christ; ie, Paul's goal is to be raised from the dead through Christ (3:11) and to be with Him for all eternity. He so wanted to be with Christ and to know Him perfectly. Is this the goal of your life? Does it show?

What can hinder us from "pressing on" toward the prize? (Phil 3:12-19)

We can forget all about the goal we have in Christ, and even think we have "arrived" (3:12); we can dwell on the past; ie, be satisfied with what we have achieved or what we have done (3:13); we can dwell on earthly things, and be caught up with them, rather than heavenly things (3:19).

What does Paul offer to the Philippian Christians in regard to these matters? (Phil 3:17)

Paul gives them an example to follow. Paul not only preached the truth, but he lived it out, including living a life focussed on knowing Christ, serving Christ, and one day being with Him (cf. Phil 1:21).

We are meant to be an example to others. Consider Paul's words in 1 Tim 4:12. Are we an example to others? Is our life worth following? Can you say "Follow me as I follow Christ?" Why not?

Who does Paul call "enemies of the cross of Christ"? Why? (Phil 3:18)

He is referring to people who profess to be Christians but their lives don't add up. Their mind is on the things of this world, and not on the things of Christ. They are not consumed to know Christ more, but by the things around us. They are "enemies" because they damage the message of the cross of Christ.

What great truths do we have in Phil 3:20-21? What effect should this have on our life?

As Christians, we are a citizen of heaven. Furthermore, we have a great Saviour who is coming to receive us to Himself and to fit us out for heaven. Therefore, we ought not to live for this world, for our home is heaven, and we ought to have our attention upon Christ (cf. Heb 12:2); knowing Him and living for Him.

Summary: **Knowing Christ and looking forward to being with Him in heavens is to be our life.**

Memory verse: **Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (NIV)**

Discipleship Explored - Episode 7 Rejoicing in Christ (Phil 4:2-9)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 4:6 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *What great longing is every Christian to have? (3:8,10)* We're too long to know Christ more.
What is the goal of the Christian life? (3:12-14, 20)? The goal is to be in heaven with Christ for all eternity. Heaven is our home, not this earth. We are a citizen of heaven, through Christ.

How can we be an "enemy of the cross of Christ"? (3:18-19) We become an enemy when we lose sight of our goal and allow ourselves to be consumed by the things around us, and become worldly-minded.

Read: Read together Philippians 4:2-9

Play DVD: **Episode 7 – Rejoicing in Christ (11 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

In a world of stress and mess, what command do we read in Phil 4:6?

We are not to worry, or to be anxious, about anything. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matt 6:25-33.

Many do worry. They even worry about worry. Instead, how are Christians to be? (Phil 4:4)

We are to rejoice always. It's not rejoicing in our circumstances, but rejoicing in the Lord. We are to rejoice in who the Lord is, all His faithful promises, and what He has done and is doing for us in Christ.

Cf.: There's always something to worry about; but there's always something to rejoice in the Lord about.

Whether we worry or rejoice depends on what we focus on. Discuss.

If we focus on our circumstances, then we will become anxious. However, if we focus our attention on the Lord, and on His sovereign rule and abundant goodness, then we will rejoice.

No matter what we're going through, "the Lord is near" (Phil 4:5). What does this truth lead to?

The Lord is near, dwelling in us by His Spirit. Thus, He will never leave us (Heb 13:5-6), and will always care for us. As a result, we should be calm and settled. This will lead to us being gentle with others. Anxiety, on the other hand, leads to agitation and outbursts of anger toward others.

At various times, we all experience anxiety entering our heart and mind. What should we do? (4:6)

Besides rejoicing in the Lord, and remembering that He is near, we should pray. We are to pray about everything, including the things that worry us. We are to trust God with our concerns (cf. 1 Peter 5:6-7; Psalm 55:22). Consider: "The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything".

Notice what Paul says about prayer in 4:6. What are we to specifically include in our prayers?

We are to pray with thanksgiving; that is, we are to be thankful for who God is and all He does for us. When we do this, we will find ourselves rejoicing in the Lord rather than worrying.

"How much we worry is directly related to how little we pray". Discuss

What does rejoicing in the Lord and praying with thanksgiving result in? (4:7)

Instead of anxiety filling our heart, it results in God's peace filling our heart. It's no ordinary peace (cf. John 14:27). It's not dependent on circumstances. It's beyond comprehension.

What does God's peace do, and where is it found? (4:7)

God's peace guards (or protects) our heart and mind from negative feelings and thoughts, like anxiety. The key is that it is found by being in Christ. All the blessings of God are found in Him (Eph 1:3).

In Phil 4:8, what does Paul urge us to do, and how does this relate to the previous teaching?

We are to dwell upon (think upon) what is true and right and good. Of course, this happens as we dwell upon God's word, and His Son Jesus. Such "right" thinking will cause us to consider Christ rather than our circumstances, and this will lead us to have peace and joy, rather than worry.

What is the main point in Phil 4:9?

We are to make sure we put into practice what we learn from God's word. Then the God of peace will be with us and grant us His peace.

What things do we need to put into practice from this week's episode so that we may not worry?

We are to rejoice in the Lord, we are to pray always (with thanksgiving), and we are to think on right things. To think on right things means that we need to be careful in regard to what we look at (eg, TV and movies) and what we read or listen to.

Do we guard our mind from "bad things"? Do we set an example for others, as Paul does? (4:9)

Summary: Rejoice in the Lord always, pray, think right – then you won't worry, but have peace.

Memory verse: Phil 4:13 I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. (NIV)

Discipleship Explored - Episode 8 Content in Christ (Phil 4:10-23)

Memory Verse: Go over the memory verse – Phil 4:13 (get a few to quote it from memory)

Revision: *What should characterise a Christian's life, according to Phil 4:4? Why?*

We should be rejoicing in the Lord always, for He is good and His lovingkindness is everlasting.

What shouldn't be seen in a Christian, and what are we to do to eradicate it? (Phil 4:6)

We are not to be anxious about anything. Instead, we are to pray with thanksgiving, and commit our worries to the Lord, as well as rejoice in Him, and think on right things.

When we put into practice what God teaches us, what does God promise? He, the God of peace, promises to be with us, and therefore, to grant us His peace – a peace that surpasses all comprehension.

Read: Read together Philippians 4:10-23

Play DVD: **Episode 8 – Content in Christ (11 minutes)**

Discuss the following questions.

Many in our society seek contentment (or happiness). Where do they believe it is to be found?

They believe it is to be found by improving their circumstances and in having money and material possessions, power and prestige, good health and a great family, a great reputation and good relationships.

In general, why don't people find contentment in these things?

When people do have things, it either does not satisfy, or it is not enough, or it is fleeting and passes away through the circumstances of life. Consider Ecclesiastes 2:9-11.

Paul was genuinely content. What do we learn about Paul's contentment? (Phil 4:11-12)

Paul's contentment had nothing to do with what he had or didn't have; nor on his circumstances.

What was the secret to Paul's contentment? (Phil 4:13)

Through Christ, Paul trusted God to strengthen and help him in every situation of life. No matter what the situation, Paul relied on God to meet his every need. Therefore, the Lord satisfied Him (cf. John 6:35).

One of the key things to being content in Christ is to rest in God's promises. We have seen many in Philippians. Briefly share some of the ones we have seen – some are to be found in our memory verses.

Phil 1:6 Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Phil 2:13 For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.

Phil 3:9b . . . the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Phil 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there . . .

Phil 4:13 I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

What does 2 Cor 1:20 say concerning God's promises?

They are all "yes" and "amen" in Christ; in other words, we have God's promises by being in Christ. Therefore, in Christ we are blessed and find true and lasting contentment.

When we are content, like it seems the Philippian Christians were, what will it lead to? (4:14-16)

We will be giving and supporting others, rather than being "tight fisted".

How does God view our giving to others – especially those in ministry? (Phil 4:18)

To God, it is like a well pleasing, fragrant offering – it pleases the Lord greatly, and He who sees everything will one day reward those who give (Phil 4:17). Consider Jesus' words in Mark 9:41.

What great truth does Paul remind us of in Phil 4:19-20?

God will supply all our needs in Christ. He is no man's debtor. He is able to abundantly supply. Therefore, in Christ, we are content, and we proclaim "to our God and Father be glory forever and ever."

What is Paul's final word to the Philippians? (4:23) What do we learn from this?

Paul's final word is for Christ's grace to be with them. The most precious thing of all is God's grace to us in Christ. It was by grace that we were saved and reconciled to God, and have every blessing in Christ.

Summary: Be content in Christ – rest in God's promises - they are all "yes" in Christ.

Memory verses: Phil 4:7 The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

 Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers,, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. (NIV)