

A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

# PREFACE:

This devotion was written by Common Ground Church in Cape Town, South Africa in 2021.

Feel free to liberally use this as a discipling resource, while giving due credit to the author and the website [www.commonresources.co.za](http://www.commonresources.co.za) where more resources like these can be found.

All Bible references are from the New International Version translation, accessed through <https://classic.biblegateway.com/>

This work has been developed for use as devotional material for a local congregation and is not published through traditional editors and publishers.

Although Common Ground Church has made every effort to ensure there are no errors (through staff and volunteer writers, editors and proof-readers), they do not assume, and hereby disclaim, liability to any party, caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident or any other cause.

Commentaries leaned on for developing this resource include:

- Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary Written by 70 African Scholars (Zondervan, 2010).
- Michael Eaton, Preaching Through Bible: Philippians (2011).

# CONTENTS:

Introduction to Philippians.....	04
How to use this devotion .....	05

## **WEEK ONE**

Day 1: Philippians 1:1-2.....	08
Day 2: Philippians 1:3-6.....	10
Day 3: Philippians 1:7-11.....	12
Day 4: Philippians 1:12-14.....	14
Day 5: Philippians 1:15-18a.....	16

## **WEEK TWO**

Day 6: Philippians 1:18b-20.....	20
Day 7: Philippians 1:21-26.....	22
Day 8: Philippians 1:27-30.....	24
Day 9: Philippians 2:1-4.....	26
Day 10: Philippians 2:5-7.....	28

## **WEEK THREE**

Day 11: Philippians 2:8-11.....	32
Day 12: Philippians 2:12-13.....	34
Day 13: Philippians 2:14-16.....	36
Day 14: Philippians 2:17-18.....	38
Day 15: Philippians 2:19-24.....	40

# CONTENTS:

## **WEEK FOUR**

Day 16: Philippians 2:25-30.....	44
Day 17: Philippians 3:1-3.....	46
Day 18: Philippians 3:4-7.....	48
Day 19: Philippians 3:8-9.....	50
Day 20: Philippians 3:10-11.....	52

## **WEEK FIVE**

Day 21: Philippians 3:12-14.....	56
Day 22: Philippians 3:15-19.....	58
Day 23: Philippians 3:20-21.....	60
Day 24: Philippians 4:1-3.....	62
Day 25: Philippians 4:4-7.....	64

## **WEEK SIX**

Day 26: Philippians 4:8-9.....	68
Day 27: Philippians 4:10-13.....	70
Day 28: Philippians 4:14-17.....	72
Day 29: Philippians 4:18-20.....	74
Day 30: Philippians 4:21-23.....	76

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS:

Michael Eaton says that while Romans might be the most important letter Paul wrote, Ephesians the most profound, 2 Corinthians the letter in which he most reveals his own feelings most, Philippians wins for all-round joyfulness.

The Greek city, Philippi, was made into a Roman colony in 42 BC by the Roman military leaders, Antony and Octavian.

Acts tells us about the birth of the church in Philippi. It was the first town in Macedonia where Paul established a church in around AD 50, after God told him in a vision to cross the sea between Troas and Europe (Acts 16).

Acts 16 tells the story of the first Christian converts in this city in the province of Macedonia. Some years later, when Paul was in prison (likely in Rome in AD 61), he wrote this letter to them.

Paul had been arrested in connection with preaching the gospel. But he uses his time well while he is in prison and writes to the church or to the churches he had started in Philippi. He has three main things on his mind as he writes. He wanted to address the rivalry and disunity in the church. He wanted to warn the church about false teachers bringing a false gospel. He had received a gift from the Philippians and wanted to express his gratitude.

All Philippians were Roman citizens, which was a source of pride given the benefits Roman citizens enjoyed (Acts 16:21). Yet, we see Paul often reminding them of their status in Christ and calling them citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20).

This letter reminds us of the huge privilege we have in being found in Christ. The peace a living relationship with God brings, and the joy on offer even in the middle of hardships and trials. It is practical in how to obey and experience God's peace.

Paul uses the word joy four times in this letter, and the word rejoice nine times. At first it is used to describe his personal experience of life in Christ, but from about chapter 3, we see it shifting to instructing the church to follow his example.

# HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTION:

In his book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer writes of how goals and lifestyles have to be entwined. He notes that you may desire the physique of professional athletes, but unless you live the type of lifestyle and make the necessary sacrifices that they do, you will never realise that goal. Likewise, if we want to become like Jesus and experience the life in him that he promises us, we need to live the lifestyle of Jesus – we need to follow the Way of Jesus. We need to spend time with him, get to know him and choose to do things like he would do them.

In striving to practice the Way of Jesus, this devotional is divided into three components each day to help us learn to be like Jesus and live life the way he demonstrated:



## **BEING WITH JESUS**

through reading scripture, prayer and reflection.



## **BECOMING LIKE JESUS**

in considering what the scripture teach us about how Jesus lived and how he commands us to live.



## **DOING WHAT JESUS WOULD DO**

applying what we have learned through the scriptures and Jesus' example to our own lives.



# WEEK ONE

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-18a

# PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2



## BE WITH JESUS:

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

As part of Paul's greeting, he includes an element of prayerfulness. He wants God's grace (God's undeserved help), to be working in the Philippians' lives and he wants the peace of God (reconciliation and friendship with God), to be their experience.

God's grace leads to peace. His grace and peace come from fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Spirit. We are objectively 'in Christ' once we place our faith in his saving work on the cross, and because this is our position, we shall continue in God's grace. Yet, it is through the experience of relationship with God that we are filled with his peace.

- Where do you feel you need more experience of the peace of God? Pray now that God would fill you with his peace and teach you to contend for it during your day.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul had many titles he could have chosen to introduce himself with. He was one of the apostles of Jesus, a Roman citizen by birth, a church planter, a highly educated scholar who was busy writing most of what would become the New Testament, a preacher, a market-place leader.

Yet, notice the title he gives himself in a letter, which outlines encouragement, leadership and admonishment. A servant of Christ Jesus.

Unlike the list of accolades which get cited before a keynote speaker, Paul merely states his simple status before Jesus. This suggests humility. Not the type of humility that just doesn't brag about oneself, but still keeps in mind all the reasons one could boast. Rather, Paul's humility demonstrated here is the true humility which recognises being a servant of Jesus vastly surpasses any other title held. Paul, rightly, boasts in the only title worth boasting in – being found in Christ. Because Jesus is the only one worth boasting in.



# PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

- What activities help you to draw close to Jesus?
- When have you found yourself growing most as a Christ-follower?

Andrew Murray, a South African-born theologian says that, “*However strong the branch becomes, however far away it reaches round the home, out of sight of the vine, all its beauty and all its fruitfulness ever depend upon that one point of contact where it grows out of the vine. So be it with us too.*”



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul experienced many trials and sufferings, yet he was constantly a joy-filled and grateful person. And his gratitude to God came out in his praying. He was grateful to God for his work in the Philippians, and he wanted them to know it too.

He brought encouragement about who the Philippians were in Christ, before bringing correction to some of the things they were getting wrong. Our identity in Christ is of paramount importance to who we are, and it is the only starting block to real change. It is only because of who we are in Jesus, that we can be renewed in and by Christ.

Paul saw his spiritual siblings first and foremost as equal receptors of God’s grace and mercy. The thoughts of who they were in Jesus brought him joy. And why? Because Paul knew, and reminds his readers, God is the one who begins the work in us, and God is the one who will carry it on to completion.

In Christ, we have eternal security both here on earth and forever in heaven. This should bring a foundation of joyful contentment no matter what circumstances surround us. And when we look at our spiritual siblings, their status in God and his work in them, should spur our joy on even more.

Paul is reminding us that because our salvation is initiated, continued and completed by God, our experience of joy in his salvation cannot be shaken by any circumstance. Paul is utterly certain about his (and our) future in Christ. How can he be so confident?



# PHILIPPIANS 1:7-11

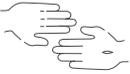


## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>7</sup> *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.* <sup>8</sup> *God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

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

- How does it impact the way you see yourself and your value, to know the God who created you, who came to earth to die to save you, has such a deep affection for you and delights to have you know him more?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul reflects his gratitude for the Christians at Philippi. They had supported him both when he was in a prison in Rome, and in his earlier ministry.

Ministry together and praying for each other, unites people. Life in Christ knits the hearts of people together in ways that often seem surprising. Paul was Jewish, the Philippians were Gentiles. Paul's love and *affection* for the people in the Philippi church filled his whole being with affection and joy. The word affection used here became the strongest Greek word to express compassionate love – love that involves one's entire being. In Christ, they were united even more than in culture or blood.

All through the ages, Christ's unifying work has defied the oppositional work of the day. The same is true today. Even as the world seems more polarised than ever, Jesus' deep work of grace and empowerment shapes his people into a unity that often defies belief. It is why Jesus says, 'by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35).

Paul commands the Philippians, and us, to continue to fight for that unity and affection for each other. What unites us in Christ is deeper and more eternal than any opinions or aspects which separate us in this temporal world.

Paul prays for love combined with knowledge and all discernment. Another translation of 'discernment' could be - 'tested by sunlight'. In those days, dishonest pottery dealers would fill in the cracks of inferior products with wax before glazing and painting them.



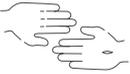
# PHILIPPIANS 1:12-14



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

- What circumstances do you feel are weighing you down and making it hard to fix your eyes on Jesus?
- Bring these before him now, one at a time. Ask him to help you weather the storms you need to weather and leave the anxieties which are not yours to carry, at his feet.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul demonstrates the confidence God gives his people, no matter the circumstances, when they fix their eyes on God's work and vision. Prison, pending trials and even execution paled in comparison to the reward set before Paul, in Christ.

Often, we seem to believe joy in God will come when he intervenes and helps us out of bad situations and circumstances, and while sometimes he does, Paul is showing us true joy is on offer even through the suffering. Like Jesus, Paul would eventually be executed for the sake of the gospel, as would many of his fellow workers, yet they held the joy set before them higher than even their lives, just like Jesus taught them to do.

Though Paul does not know whether he will live or die, he believes God rules over the events happening in his life. The gospel is being preached, and Paul's joy is found in the fact that God will get the glory no matter what happens to him.

In fact, Paul even reminds his readers that his current predicament is turning out to be advantageous to the gospel advancement. When the news came to the Philippians that Paul had been arrested in Rome, Christ-followers would have been discouraged, knowing he planned to take the gospel to Rome. Now he was there – but in prison. It would have seemed like the opposition had won.

But God...

Paul's presence in this prison actually led to greater interest in the gospel. Paul had the opportunity to share his message with the palace guards, which he did. He was

also awaiting trial before Caesar himself. The highest authorities in Rome got to listen to Paul's message. Instead of revelling in the sympathy and concern of his friends, he is reminding them of God's goodness and work through his circumstances.

Circumstances may not be easy, but we can be sure God has a plan of forwarding his gospel which will not be thwarted. Sometimes things happen to us that seem to be major disasters, but Paul teaches us to keep our eyes open for ways in which God will turn it around for his glory. Even Jesus' death on the cross looked like defeat to those around him, but we know now it was the ultimate victory.

***I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)***

Jesus warns his followers that the work of advancing the gospel brings danger and sometimes even suffering. He himself suffered ultimately to bring reconciliation between us and God. Paul, rightly, sees his suffering in light of Jesus' example. It pales in significance compared to what Jesus went through and achieved, and yet, in God's great grace, our suffering on his behalf means we get to share in the inheritance of Jesus. This means through our suffering, people may come to know Jesus and be saved.

Like Paul we might find ourselves in chains – of one kind or another – but if we keep our eyes open, we shall notice God means it for good. It will turn out well, for God, for ourselves, for the gospel.

- How might Jesus be inviting and prompting you to see your circumstances through his eyes?
- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

God's gifts of apostles and pastors to his church are simply God providing those who will train everyone else to be his ministers and messengers. Every Christ-follower is an evangelist.

Not only is Paul reaching out to others with the gospel message; his example is arousing others to do the same. If we hold to Jesus' teaching and example, then like Paul was willing to suffer, we need to be willing to suffer, as well.

*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose (Jim Elliot).*

- Who is God prompting you to reach out to and share your testimony, or invite to church? Perhaps to share your testimony, or invite to church? Pray for that person/those people now and for courage to step out in faith and reach out to them.
- Where might God be inviting you to go to take his message of hope?
- Who is God calling you to pray for? Spend some time praying for them by name, now.

# PHILIPPIANS 1:15-18a



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>15</sup> *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.*

<sup>16</sup> *The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel.*

<sup>17</sup> *The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.* <sup>18</sup> *But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*

- One way to take our pride to Jesus and seek true humility is to focus on Jesus.
- Take some time now to remind yourself of why Jesus is so worthy of glory. Pray some prayers of thanksgiving for who he is and all he has done.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul reminds his readers that even in Christian ministry, we battle with pride and wrongful motives. Our joy in Christ is robbed when we compare ourselves to others or allow their competition with us to ruin our joy.

When we allow pride to rule us, we can even take something as precious as the preaching of the gospel and twist it so the very preaching of salvation becomes an occasion of envy and rivalry.

Paul is speaking here about preaching and evangelism, but it runs true across leadership, ministries, church life, home life and the marketplace. As we allow our pride to take control, selfish ambition becomes our motive. We become overly concerned about ourselves and our reputation. We experience jealousy as others seem to be achieving more acclaim or glory than we do. This robs us of joy and robs God of our worship.

Proverbs 21:2 says that, *'Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart'*.

- When do you most easily give in to pride?
- When do you find yourself feeling overlooked or offended?
- Who helps you identify areas of pride in your life and helps you stay accountable to fighting pride? (if there is no-one who does this who could you ask to play this role?)





# WEEK TWO

PHILIPPIANS 1:18b-2:7

# PHILIPPIANS 1:18b-20



## BE WITH JESUS:

*Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

Doubt is not disbelief. On two occasions in the New Testament, Jesus dealt with the doubt of close followers. John the Baptist sent a message from prison to ask if Jesus really was the Christ. Later, Thomas, his disciple, struggled to believe in the resurrection. Both times, Jesus pointed towards the evidence of the gospel, himself (Matthew 11:4 and John 20:27), without frustration or judgement.

- What areas of your walk with God have you been struggling to find faith in? What questions, doubts or fears are you wrestling with?
- Take your doubts and fears to Jesus now and let him remind you of who he is and all he has done.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Once again, Paul experienced joy as he reflects the fact that his friends in Philippi were praying for him, and in the confidence God would provide Spirit empowerment for his deliverance and well-being, even in prison.

Paul also tells his readers what he will do himself. He is primarily confident of their help through prayer and of God's help through the power of the Holy Spirit; but he also knows he is an agent in his levels of joy.

*<sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I shall not be at all ashamed but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.*

Paul plans to give Jesus glory no matter what comes. The deep desire of Paul was to know Christ more, to live for Christ, to die daily to self and, if necessary, to give his life for his Saviour. His eager hope was to be his utmost for the glory of Jesus, so others would come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Paul hoped that he would remain faithful to Jesus up to the end of his life and never be ashamed of his Saviour.



# PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26



## BE WITH JESUS:

- What consumes your mind, your energy, your worries?
- What do you find yourself thinking about when you daydream?
- What is 'gain' for you in life?

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



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul is in prison, possibly facing execution, yet his words and requests for prayer reflect his ultimate goals and life vision. This focus is what results in his joy, his confidence. He is able to look above circumstances which would normally require all focus – the fear for his life, the injustice of why he was imprisoned, the physical injustice inflicted against him – instead, he reminds his readers of his focus and the source of his joy. If he lives, he is doing it for Christ and therefore anything that happens to him is worthwhile – if for the sake of Jesus and the gospel. If he dies, then he will be with Christ, which is even better for him.

***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)***

How did Paul come to love Christ in this way? How does anyone get to truly be able to say, 'To live is Christ'?

Paul had met with Jesus. He came to see who Jesus was. He focused on the glory of Jesus, his love, his sacrifice on the cross. Paul had been forgiven much. He lived with gratitude and in awe of his saviour. He knew that anything good in him, his thoughts, emotions and behaviours were because of being in Jesus. Jesus had overhauled his life and eternal trajectory. This meant the only thing Paul could and would boast in, was Jesus.

Why is it gain for a Christ-follower to die? Because of what we are released from: suffering, pain, loneliness, rejection, need, temptation, sin, doubt, enemies, misunderstandings between friends or between spouses, criticism, fear, intimidation, emotional problems, tears, hurt, depression, boredom, evil.

Why is it gain for a Christ-follower to die? Because of what is in heaven: there we will fully know the presence of Jesus. We will see him face to face – without the need for faith. Heaven is a place where Jesus talks to us personally, a place of perfect community with all God’s people, a place of fullness of joy and pure happiness. Heaven is a place of activity, of worship, of purpose, a place of love.

Jesus lived knowing this truth. Paul also had this vision for his life, even in prison.

- If you really believe the above two descriptions of the one-day reality of an eternity with God in heaven, how do these truths shape your approach to life on this side of eternity?



**DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2)*

Paul was following the example of Jesus, as we are to do.

Crucifixion was one of the most awful ways of execution in the ancient world. Even for a criminal, it was one of the most shameful and humiliating deaths as you hung naked with your crimes engraved above your head for spectators to see.

Jesus knew the excruciating pain and suffering which was coming, he showed fear and grief, yet he knew it would only be for a limited time. He knew a time was coming when he would return to his Father, having completed his will. There was a deep sense of joy within Jesus that could not be taken away from him. He knew even in the suffering, sadness, and affliction, true joy is there when you set your heart to follow the will of God - even unto death.

- Spend some time reflecting on all the ways Jesus has been faithful to you.
- How has he changed you more into his likeness?
- Pray prayers of praise for who Jesus is and what he’s done and allow these truths to stir your heart towards joy.

**THOUGHTS:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

Faith is a gift of God. We can expect trouble when we follow God. But we are also given the gift of faith, of hope, and assurance that Jesus has already won the victory. Whatever happens on this side of heaven, we know our final destiny and who is there.

- Spend some time asking Jesus to make these truths freshly real to you.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul uses a Greek word (*politeuomai*) connected with citizenship. Philippi was a Roman colony. Their citizenship as Romans was considered a highly privileged status which brought many rights enjoyed by citizens of Rome itself. Roman citizens were to be responsible and conduct themselves in a way that didn't reflect badly on their city and nation. Paul reminds his readers that if they are devoted to the honour of an earthly kingdom, how much more so should believers be devoted to the kingdom of God?

Paul has in mind here our heavenly Citizenship. We are to remember that we belong to heaven – that is our primary Citizenship and destination. We are to live, even now, as members of heaven. Paul reminds us that we are ambassadors. We are called to this world, but we are not of this world (John 15:19). Our allegiance is to another Sovereign, but we are to conduct ourselves in a manner that honours both heaven, as well as the people on earth.

Paul reminds his readers to be unified as God's people. They will face criticism and opposition from the world just as Jesus also warned. It means they are to be separate from the world, but not separate from each other. They are to encourage each other, pray for each other. They are to have a common purpose, a single determination to live for Jesus in this world.



# PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

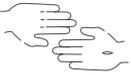


## BE WITH JESUS:

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

Paul commands us to be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and mind (vs 2) – this is because he knows as we spend time with Jesus, we all grow closer to having his mind and heart for others. Our unity is found in Jesus. He doesn't call us to become one culturally or ethnically. He calls us to unity in the diversity, in that we spend time with him and take on his attributes. Paul wants the Christians to be drawn together in their common love of Jesus and his people.

- Spend some time asking Jesus to give you this encouragement and comfort in him.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

When Paul says, 'if you have any encouragement', he is making a logical inference, not suggesting they may not have encouragement. He means 'since you have encouragement', therefore make his joy complete. He is pointing out four truths of Christ-followers that follow his logical 'if'.

- > Since we are in Christ ...
- > Since we have comfort from his love ...
- > Since we have a common sharing in the Spirit ...
- > Since we have tenderness and compassion ...

Paul is reminding Christ-followers, that in Christ they have these four attributes. And they lead to certain behaviours ... because of our experiences in Christ and by his power, these behaviours are markers of God's people:

- > We have unity when we are in Christ.
- > We have humility.
- > We are self-less.

But notice that before the outworking of behaviours, Paul is referring to the inworking of God. We are in Christ through his saving work. We couldn't earn it. As we revel in Christ, he shapes us into his likeness, and this leads to unity. As we find comfort from his love, recognising that we don't deserve it, we become humble. As we deepen our love for the Holy Spirit's work in us, we are shaped into his tenderness and compassion which leads us to serve others selflessly, because that is how Christ served us.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

***Do nothing out of rivalry or empty conceit, but in humility let each of you consider the other person as more important than yourselves. (vs3)***

Pride and rivalry are so harmful. We see it in our world, our workplace, our church, our family. They are destructive. Even friendly rivalry can often lead to pain and sin. Think about the ugly side of sport, politics, competitions, workplace deals, even board-games. Jesus calls his followers to a radical counter-cultural way of operating.

The greatest example of this is Jesus' life and death. He came to earth to look to our concerns. He died so we could have life. He calls us to serve others with the same level of sacrifice and selflessness. As we focus on how much he has done for us, serving others becomes more instinctive, because Christ in us will always look to serve and love others. The sinner naturally aims at pleasing himself. The Christ-follower is to aim at meeting the deepest needs of others, and so be like Jesus.

- What would it look like in your different spheres if people really considered the other person as more important than themselves?
- How would this change the way you engage with some of your relationships?
- Are there people or situations that God is prompting you to repent of how you have dealt with them? Or to reach out and ask for forgiveness? To forgive?
- Spend some time praying through these situations.
- If there are people you need to make amends with, pray about it. Then reach out to build that unity.

### **THOUGHTS:**

---

---

---

---

---

# PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>5</sup> *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

<sup>6</sup> *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

- What does this passage tell you about Jesus?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

In his appeal for humility, Paul brings in the example of Jesus himself. We are to be motivated in the same way Jesus was motivated:

Christ had divine power. He was involved in the task of creating the universe. All things were made by him.

Christ had wealth. Though he was rich, yet he became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Everything that was made and everything before being made was his. All we have belongs to him who made it.

Christ shared the same glory with the Father and had perfect companionship in the Trinity. There was an eternal love-relationship between the Son and the Father and the Spirit.

Paul reminds us of all Jesus had, because Jesus was willing to step down from the radiating divine glory. Paul says: this was the mentality of the Son of God; he was willing to forgo glory and step down into a humble position. Paul says to the Philippians (and to us): 'You do the same!'

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?





# WEEK THREE

PHILIPPIANS 2:8-2:24

# PHILIPPIANS 2:8-11



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>8</sup> *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!* <sup>9</sup> *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,* <sup>10</sup> *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* <sup>11</sup> *and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- When/if you describe Jesus to others who don't know him, how would you describe him?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul is describing two important descriptions of Jesus here. He was a genuine human being, with a true human nature. Jesus could be tempted. He had to mature as a person and live by faith and growing obedience.

Yet, he was also the Son of God. This means Jesus chose to experience life as we do and when he went to the cross to die a humiliating death on behalf of mankind ... he did it voluntarily. As God, he could have chosen not to. This is why Paul reminds us Jesus humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. It was not that others humiliated him, but that he chose to humble himself! The phrase 'became obedient to death' indicates his divinity. Unlike us, Jesus didn't have to die.

He chose to accept it although he did not want it. 'Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me', he prayed. But it was the only way to save us, so Jesus went on to pray, 'Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.' (Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42)

Jesus humbled himself in obedience to all it entailed. He endured physical suffering, shame and the abuse hurled at him. He appeared a failure to his people and his enemies, being misunderstood and abandoned by his closest friends and allies. Yet, Jesus accepted it all. He held nothing back, and in doing so, gained everything. And because of this life of obedience, there was a reward for the cross. God rewarded Jesus, and he will reward us. We are not saved by our obedience, but because of Jesus' obedience. But after we have come to salvation-by-faith, we are rewarded for our obedience.

During his earthly ministry, people often spoke of Jesus negatively. His name was despised by many during his time on earth, and even since then. Think of how his

name is used in media, both flippantly and to curse. In the time of Jesus, his name was commonplace, like Joshua. But Paul tells us here that Jesus has been given a new name – ‘the Lord’. At the name of ‘Jesus’ – the despised name – people will recognize ‘the Lord’. God did the exalting. Jesus did not exalt himself. For now, only those with faith see that Jesus is the Lord of all, but one day every eye will see and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!

His name, Jesus Christ, is honoured above all other names in the whole universe. He is the only Saviour and hope of the world. No other name can be called on, but Jesus. His name really has been exalted higher than any other name.

Jesus came to be like us. His is human life as it really should be. His life is an invitation to us to humble ourselves and take the form of a servant.

Some of the ways Jesus demonstrated this was he did not use being God as a way of getting advantages for himself. He did not use his position to be boastful or proud. Jesus made himself nothing. He did not make people feel inferior. He was not self-centred. He never practised discrimination.

He was willing to do what God said. He was willing to look foolish. He did not let what people thought about him influence how he served God and others.

- What stands out for you about who Jesus is in today’s Scripture and considerations?
- What attributes most draw you to him now? How do you think it will affect your worship if you keep these truths in mind?



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

Paul reminds us of all of this because he is asking us to develop the same ‘mentality’ as Jesus. He is asking us to deliberately choose the pathway of humility and obedience to the Father – especially in the way it works out in our relationships to others.

- Where do you think God is prompting you to follow Jesus’ example specifically today?
- What areas do you think you need him to help you to grow in obedience to him?
- Spend some time now praying prayers of exaltation for who Jesus is and what he has done. Maybe pray through today’s scripture, using it as a template for praise:

*‘Thank you, Jesus, for your humble and obedient life which helps us understand how to please God. Thank you for enduring the cross on our behalf. Jesus, you are the Name above all names! You are the one to whom every knee will bow, and tongue confess that you are Lord. Jesus, you are Lord. Help me live my life in obedience to you, for the glory of God.’*

# PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,* <sup>13</sup> *for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose.*

- What situations are you facing now which you know God is wanting you to develop your obedience and character in him?
- Ask him to empower you and guide you now.
- Especially think of ways in which God is calling you to have the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

God created the heavens and earth without us, he gives the Holy Spirit, he saves us. We do not even cry out to God without him first prompting us to do so. God saves us by coming to us when we are *'dead in trespasses and sins'* (*Ephesians 2:1*). We do not 'justify' ourselves before God. We are not saved by our own efforts or our own righteousness.

Yet, there are other aspects of living the Way of Jesus in which we are to be involved, in which we take responsibility. Lives consistent with scripture are the most effective witness believers can bear for Jesus.

Once we come to salvation, we are no longer dead in trespasses and sins. We are made alive in Christ. We are being renewed in him. So here, Paul writes to the Philippians, 'Work out your own salvation'. This does not mean that we do good to earn salvation or acceptance. We are not called to work **for** our salvation.

Remember what Paul has already been instructing his readers 1:27–2:5:

- > to be faithful to God against opposition (1:27–30)
- > to show graciousness and humility towards each other (2:1–4)
- > to have the mind of Jesus in the way we live (2:5–11).

He is continuing this appeal when he says, 'Work out your own salvation . . .'

We are to take responsibility for the way in which we live, knowing it is God who starts the work in us, and God who completes it. We are called to work with God toward his

goals, not our own. And his goals will be achieved, so we can have assurance that our work and development are not in vain when they are aligned with God's plans and done for his glory. Paul's appeal is based on an assurance of God's continued work in our lives. God is not going to leave us. As Jude 1:24-25 reminds us:

*To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

Jesus is the one who changes us. He justifies and sanctifies us. He is the one who is able to keep us from stumbling and present us before God without fault, because we appear in his righteousness.

God produces the desires in our hearts; and we must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to walk in obedience. God is working to produce both!

- Spend some time thinking through all the ways Jesus has worked on your character, the tasks he has called you to do, his faithfulness in your life. Thank him for these and the confidence that he will bring it to completion.



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

Jesus faced trials and suffering. As he remained steadfast and obedient, he demonstrated his perfection. He is the model for us in how we are to approach life. We will face trials and suffering, and Jesus has demonstrated that in his power, we too can overcome these in obedience to God and for his glory.

Now you have spent some time talking to God about what he is calling you to do, ask him to ignite his word in your heart. The Holy Spirit is ready to give us extra help as we ask for it.

We go out into the world ready to live out our 'citizenship' in the kingdom of God in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ.

- Think on how Jesus lived his life and how obedient he was to God's will for him. Ask him where he is calling you to do the same.
- Pray through today's reading, listening to God's prompting, then take the first step of obedience that you feel him calling you towards.

### **THOUGHTS:**

---

---

---

---

---

# PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>14</sup> *Do everything without grumbling or arguing,* <sup>15</sup> *so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky* <sup>16</sup> *as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain.*

- What stood out to you in today’s reading about what Jesus desires from his people?
- What might he be saying to you now? Take some time to listen.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Up to this point in Philippians, Paul has called for steadfastness and unity (1:27–2:4), pointing to the humility and example of Jesus (2:5–11), and reminding them that as Christ-followers they also have agency through spiritual disciplines towards their maturity (2:12–13). Now he gives some practical instructions, applying what he has been saying.

Paul forbids grumbling (the expression of a discontented and resentful spirit). We are not to practice the art of discontent, finding fault with everything. As he has already laid the foundation of joy being found in Christ and his saving work and example, Christ-followers are to put their trust in the sovereignty of God. Like Paul, we need to practice setting our gaze higher than circumstances and finding joy in Christ. This will be shown by how we speak about life, ourselves and others.

He forbids ‘arguing’ (the spirit of quarrelsomeness or controversy). His reason is we will be seen as blameless in the eyes of others. Paul doesn’t mean sinless; he means not being easy to criticize. Paul tells us to represent our Father, putting his character and nature on display to others who look at us as his representation on earth.

It is because of who we represent that we can be shining stars in the darkness. It is Christ in us, who makes us shine. We have a light that can help others.

Paul’s reward one day is connected to the lives of his people. He reminds us that his reward in heaven will be standing beside the people with whom he shared his life and the message of God. There is hardly a better reward than standing beside people who you were part of in their journey to Jesus, imagine how much more so one day in heaven.



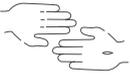
# PHILIPPIANS 2:17-18



## BE WITH JESUS:

- How easy do you find it to rejoice?
- What do you think needs to happen for you to experience happiness and joy currently?
- Think of someone you know who seems like a joyful person, what makes them so? How does it affect others around them?

*<sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Yesterday, we learned that contending for contentment is important for Christ-followers. Paul continues his thought now in reminding his followers that conditions do not need to be right to experience joy and contentment.

Many times, we think joy comes from having the perfect life, or is delayed until we have more of something (a better job, better salary, a family, holiday), or less of something (financial troubles, illness, workload). But Paul again and again reminds his readers, joy is deeper than happiness and not determined by circumstances. He is in prison and has found great reasons to rejoice in that fact itself.

Paul's language here is taken from the Old Testament. The priest in the Old Testament system of sacrifice would offer an animal or a grain offering. A 'drink offering' was a smaller sacrifice which was added to the larger sacrifice. A jug of wine was poured out after a sacrifice had been offered (Numbers 28:7).

Paul uses this as a picture of his own position. The Philippians are themselves offering a sacrifice. Paul rejoices at the thought that both he and the Philippians are offering themselves to God as living sacrifices.

In this letter, Paul is constantly asking them, by example and direct request, to rejoice. Here Paul is finding joy at the thought of a double sacrifice.

Paul was telling his readers that he did not want them to feel he was suffering. He wanted them to see his circumstances as he did – a great privilege. He wanted the Philippians to rejoice at the privilege he has of adding to his sacrifice of his life to God.



# PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24



## BE WITH JESUS:

- Who have been your greatest mentors? What attributes and types of character did they display?
- How might one of your mentors describe you? Has this changed over the years?

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



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Remember, at the start of this chapter Paul encouraged the Philippians to not only look after their own interests, but also the interests of others. Now, he demonstrates how to do that by explaining the reason he wants to send Timothy to them.

Even though he is in prison, Paul is strategising and making plans for the churches and people he serves with. He not only takes the time in prison to write to his friends in Philippi, but he also plans to send a man who he saw like a son, who could help them grow in maturity even more.

Paul also displays that maturity suggests a high value in contact with people. Not only did he plan to send Timothy to them, but to come himself as soon as he was able. Proximity is needed for mentorship and growth.

We see a description of discipleship and mentorship here in Paul's description of Timothy. Paul trusted Timothy to represent him well in his absence because of a good track record of character and maturity.

Think about the types of people Jesus drew to himself while on earth ... sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, rich, poor, sickly, marginalised.

- What types of attributes of Jesus do you think drew these different types of people to him?
- What drew you to Jesus?
- What stood out to you in today's reading and considerations that you would like Jesus to shape you more into?





# WEEK FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 2:25-3:11

# PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>25</sup> *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.*

<sup>26</sup> *For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.* <sup>27</sup> *Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.* <sup>28</sup> *Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.* <sup>29</sup> *So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him,* <sup>30</sup> *because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

- Do you know anyone who is currently struggling with illness? Are you? Why not take this gap to bring your requests before God?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome by the Philippians to deliver their financial gift to Paul (Phil 4:18). They intended him to stay in Rome as their 'representative' and Paul's 'minister' (2:25). Then Epaphroditus fell ill and came close to dying; his friends and family in Philippi were worried about him. Epaphroditus recovered, but Paul felt that it was time to send him back home.

Christ-followers do not lose ordinary human realities as they grow in dedication to God and his work. It is still possible for such a person to miss their family, to get sick, to need the support and comfort of the familiar as they recover.

We also see here, that despite Paul rejoicing in the suffering that following Christ can bring for the sake of the gospel and God's glory, he still felt the anxiety of dangerous work and its toll on others. He was concerned for his friend.

Both Paul and Epaphroditus display that they are human and could only take a certain amount of anxiety before it became too much for them to bear.

One reason why Paul wants to send Epaphroditus back home is that he did not want to have to handle an anxiety that might be too great. ***'I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.'***

[vs 28]



# PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

Paul warns of a group of people that were causing problems by preaching false theology. These people found glory in their religion, or circumcision, or in their nationality, but they did not glory in Christ himself.

God tells us not to depend in any way on ourselves, but to trust completely in Jesus.

- When you find it hard to worship God, what do you find the obstacles to be?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

The problem with this type of preaching is that it can be so close to the truth that it becomes harder to discern. The group Paul was warning the Philippians about, were pushing people towards a combination of national religion, moralism and tradition. This tendency was found in Paul's time and it still is found today. A form of legalism and earning salvation rather than preaching salvation through grace. Even one degree departure from truth can result in a massive departure down the line. Imagine an airplane that changes direction by one degree ... at first it remains close to the path ... but eventually it can't even see the path anymore.



Before Jesus came to earth, salvation was national, and faith had many rituals and sacrifices. When he died, Jesus opened salvation to the whole world. God's people were no longer identified as one nation, the cultural symbols and sacrificial rituals of salvation were replaced by the sacraments of the New Covenant. But, communion and baptism are not channels of salvation, but rather visual expressions of faith and relationship in the work done by God.

Paul reminds his readers that true faith is relying on the saving work of the cross, putting no confidence in our works and deeds. Our access and acceptance to God is won by Jesus alone.

Any departure from this, can become very problematic if not corrected. To counter heresy, the gospel of salvation through trusting in Jesus alone needs to be affirmed again and again. And joy in Christ, even in suffering, is a fruit of the true gospel.

The reason Paul calls these teachers, 'mutilators of the flesh' (3:2) is that he is saying that their rituals achieved nothing. No religious ceremony in itself changes the heart of any person. Circumcision then, merely mutilated the flesh. It brought the believer no closer to God.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?
- How might you be tempted to trust in certain rituals or disciplines to approach God?



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

*If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)*

In our world, we can default to this faulty way of thinking even in our context of church. Whether it be thinking we need a certain style of worship, a certain stance in politics, a certain set of beliefs about the world to be truly Christian, Paul is emphatically preaching that only the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus is what brings salvation.

While spiritual disciplines and sacraments are important, they do not save us. As soon as we use them to disqualify ourselves or others from approaching God and worshiping him, we have bought into a lie, false doctrine. Our acceptance comes from Jesus, and nothing we can do can get that acceptance or lose it.

When we are made new in Christ, when we have his Spirit living in us, we are inclined to respond to God. There is real faith, repentance, and obedience. We grow in appetite for the things of God. And we experience joy even in the midst of sufferings and hardship.

- Ask Jesus to show you any ways that you have believed your traditions, rituals or disciplines disqualify or qualify your acceptance before him and repent of these.
- Spend some time praying prayers of gratitude for Jesus' free gift of salvation. Ask for increased levels of joy and wisdom.

# PHILIPPIANS 3:4-7



## BE WITH JESUS:

- Ask God to speak to you through today's passage now.

*<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. <sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.*

- What would look different in your life if you trusted in Jesus completely?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul starts to give examples of how he could boast in things of the flesh if they made a difference to salvation. It is the easiest way for him to explain what he means about there being no boasting in anything but Jesus and his work.

By 'flesh' Paul means anything that arises from the human nature that we were born with. True faith arises from a work of God in our hearts; it does not arise out of human ability. Paul himself had plenty of human advantages, but he had to learn they were all entirely useless in the matter of salvation or experiencing the power of God.

He came from a religiously prestigious family. He was well educated. To the Jewish religious leaders, he had proven himself by being one of the biggest persecutors of the new sect known as Christianity.

People have often believed that the family that they were born into, or initiated into, or the nationality they were born in, even the language they can speak proves they are one of God's people. But Paul is saying even with all his 'earthly' accolades and privileges, they count for nothing towards salvation and knowing God. He even discounts morality as a qualification.

Still today, we can suppose our acceptance by something like these accolades Paul mentioned. Or perhaps we have replaced them with other advantages in our lives. We may somehow think that some form of religious credentials gains us a place in the kingdom of God, but like Paul, we need to realize anything that replaces God's saving work in our lives is actually hindering us. We need to give up trusting in anything that replaces Christ and his salvation.



# PHILIPPIANS 3:8-9



## BE WITH JESUS:

- What are you most afraid of losing in life?
- What part of your life gets your most energy and free-thinking time?

*<sup>8</sup>What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.*



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul had just listed seven things he had to disregard to know Jesus more fully and to experience his saving grace (circumcision, nationality, tribe, language, denomination, temperament, morality). They weren't just examples, he is testifying to his readers about things he had to learn to lay aside, many of which would have been part of his very identity.

Now, he moves on to add 'all things'. There were other things besides the seven that he could have mentioned: wealth, career, prestige, a comfortable life, fame as a Jewish rabbi, approval of his family. Maybe we can resonate with some of these ... maybe we can add some. Paul is saying that when he really understood what he had in Jesus and his new identity as a servant of Christ, all these 'important' parts of his identity and standing in the world are incomparable. In fact, he considers them to be a loss in comparison to the joy he has found in knowing Jesus.

When Paul was saved on the Damascus Road, he learned that all his religiosity had not brought him to a knowledge of salvation. Before he knew Christ, he had nothing that would help him in relation to God. But what Paul learned then, he still knows now. He is still regarding every so-called advantage to be rubbish in comparison with knowing Christ. This is his mentality all the time; it resembles the mentality of Christ that Paul has already described (2:6-8).

Paul is willing to give up every possible advantage, every distinction that gets him recognition in the eyes of others – if only he gets to know Christ.

In Paul's mind, and for us, we should ask: What earthly glory can possibly outshine the wonder of knowing the Son of God in a personal way?

When you lose something that is not very precious to you, you do not really care when you lose it. But Paul is telling his readers that sometimes things that are precious to us are forcibly taken from us. There were times when he lost things that had been precious to him. He was abandoned by friends, had wealth and comforts torn from him, had his liberty taken and spent years in various prisons. Paul had experienced hardships and even shipwrecks.

He is not making light of the losses we experience in life – he is making the case that the glory and privilege of knowing Jesus is so vastly superior that even losing the most precious things he could think of, would seem like garbage in comparison.

The point of this passage is the astounding worthiness of Jesus, not trying to pretend as if the people and things of this world that are precious to us shouldn't be.

When we experience loss, we know that Jesus identifies and grieves with us, and we can deliberately allow God to bring us to joy in him regardless of the circumstances. He is the source of deep joy, even in the loss of precious earthly things.

We regard the knowledge of Jesus as priceless treasure. When we face loss, God will lead us into intimate and deeper knowledge of Jesus. God wants us to 'gain Christ and be found in him'. Paul suffered much, but he came to live each day for the greater excellency of knowing Christ.

- Are there areas of loss or grief that you need Jesus' comfort now? Ask him for his comfort and love to be experienced.
- Are there attributes of your identity and self-worth that are bringing you more gain than Jesus himself? Repent of these and ask Jesus to make himself ultimate in your heart.



### **DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

***Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)***

We don't delight in Jesus so he will give us these other things we desire – this is idolatry and James warns us sternly against this (James 4:3-4). When we delight ourselves more and more in God, like Paul is charging his readers in this letter to do, scriptures tell us that God responds by giving us the desire of our heart – God himself.

- How has your experience of gaining Christ been recently?
- How does the example of Jesus and Paul shape the way you prioritise values and advantages in life?
- What is one thing you feel challenged to do or implement after today's reading?

# PHILIPPIANS 3:10-11



## BE WITH JESUS:

*<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

- What stands out to you when you think about Jesus?
- Which of his characteristics comes to mind? How do you describe him?  
What words do you use?
- How has your description and knowledge changed from when you first met Jesus to now?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

God is a God who wants to be known and has made himself known through creation, through scriptures, and most importantly, through Jesus.

If our knowledge and intimacy of knowing Jesus hasn't changed over time, like it does with the people around us, we need to ask ourselves if we really are getting to know the person of Jesus.

Paul is reflecting on his own walk with Jesus and how his desire to know Jesus hasn't changed, in fact, it gets deeper and hungrier. This is why he can look at all the loss in his life, whether reputation, superficial things or those more precious and closer to his heart - and still see the worthiness of Christ and what he holds dear, as too vast to even consider them comparable. It is through knowing Jesus deeply that this joy and comparison can be made. And this is the type of relationship Paul is urging his readers to seek.

Again, Paul isn't urging us to think less of people and earthly things as much as he is urging us to look at the objective truth of Christ's ultimate worthiness. He knows that when we focus on Jesus and see his ultimate worth, these other things will fall into their appropriate place in our hearts and minds. Not minimised, but rather correctly prioritised.

Paul had been following Jesus for over thirty years when he penned these words and he is still saying, 'My purpose is to get to know Jesus.'





# WEEK FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-4:7

# PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

- How have you changed over your time of knowing Jesus?
- What do you feel like he is currently working on in your life and character?
- Where do you feel you resist God changing or challenging you?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul reflects how this side of heaven will always involve the work needed to grow in Christlikeness. He knows that he still needs to grow in God, even after years of knowing Jesus.

His letter is charging the Philippians to understand the same. That there is always more of Christ to be known. There is more righteousness to flow into his life. There is more work to be done, more suffering to endure. Paul is being conformed to Christ's death and the story is not finished yet. Paul has not reached the reward, nor has he even finished that which will bring him to his heavenly reward.

Growth towards maturity and heavenly reward involve time. It is hard for us in our instant gratification culture to be patient with ourselves and others, and to put in the hard work to see results which require a long time of persistence and dedication. Maturity and growth require us to be honest with ourselves and humble before God and others. It takes desire, patience and sacrifice to achieve in Jesus everything he has set before us. Not in our strength, but a hunger to have God's will done in and through our lives for his glory. It takes steadfast focus on God. Paul reminds us to seek this reward of Jesus above all else. This also means that we are to lay aside everything that would pull our attention away from this life mission.



# PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2



## BE WITH JESUS:

*<sup>15</sup>All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup>Only let us live up to what we have already attained. <sup>17</sup>Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. <sup>18</sup>For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.*

When Paul refers to people thinking differently, he is not talking about major areas of doctrine but about mentality or attitudes. Once again, he is inviting followers to get to know Jesus more deeply and to experience his power. It is a sign of maturity for such a deep desire for more of Jesus at the expense of what the world has to offer.

- When have you be surprised by joy in God when your circumstances would suggest the joy misplaced?
- Do you need joy now? Perhaps pause now and ask God for this joy if you feel this is you.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul knows that God is leading his people towards maturity (as he has said since the first chapter), and Paul's role is to guide them on the path God already has for them. Paul can't command or bully them into maturity in Christ, just like he couldn't save them. God is the one who awakens our spiritual hunger and fulfils it, our part is to help each other to walk the path.

Paul reminds us that God's faithfulness and knowledge has already been made known to a certain measure. We need to hold true to what we have been shown already if we want to know God even more.

The remainder of Philippians 3:19 tells of the sin that brings destruction. When Paul says, 'Their god is their belly', he means people who live for physical and sensuous appetites, and nothing more. Things they should be ashamed of (legalism, haughtiness, self-indulgence), they are proud of. They have their minds 'set on earthly things'. Their eyes are not at all on heaven and the prize for serving Jesus. But we – says Paul – are to be different. We are waiting for the prize that will come on the day of resurrection. We live for heavenly rewards.



# PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>20</sup> *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

- How important is your citizenship in your country to you?
- Is there any place on earth where you are wanting or hoping for dual citizenship? Why is this? What privileges will that citizenship bring you?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

As mentioned, the Philippians were proud to be considered Roman citizens. Paul now reminds Christ-followers about their more important citizenship in heaven and that this citizenship is a current status. Like someone who has citizenship in two countries, Christ-followers are dual-citizens of heaven and on earth. But the greatest of the two is our heavenly citizenship.

We operate in the already and the not yet. God's kingdom is already here, but only one day will it be fully here. Our citizenship is set though. We are to behave as citizens of the already and not yet realities of the kingdom of God. Doing the work Jesus has set for us, with the hope and expectation of his return to wrap up history and usher in his eternal kingdom.

This way of viewing our life should impact everything! For one, our allegiance is to Jesus, our King. We are to have the interest of the world in our interests because the world belongs to God. It is his world. Yet at the same time we also know that God is going to transform this world.

We look back to the cross and forward to the second coming of Christ. Jesus is already the Saviour and he has already paid for our sins on the cross. But, we are waiting for his visible return.



# PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3



## BE WITH JESUS:

*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! <sup>2</sup> I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

- What have been some of your best community experiences? What made them so?
- When has it been difficult to love your community? What made it so? What did you feel like God was saying to you?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul now turns back to his two constant reminders. In light of Jesus and what he has done, in light of our citizenship being in heaven, and our destiny being transformed into Christ's likeness one day, contend for steadfastness and unity on this side of eternity.

Our steadfastness is not out of our own will and work, but in God's empowering. Why can we be steadfast, standing firm? Because of the hope and expectation of the coming of Jesus and the resurrection reward of heaven.

God has already won our unity, that is why we are instructed to maintain it, to contend for it.

Paul specifically addresses a dispute within the Philippi church. Disunity comes in so easily. The work of keeping unity has to be done in more than one way. Paul has already asked the Philippians to '*stand firm in one spirit*' and '*strive together*' for the gospel (1:27). He has asked them to be '*like-minded*' and '*think the same thing*' (2:2). But above all, he calls them to display a mentality of lowliness and humility, a willingness to be like Jesus.

Paul instructed the leaders at Philippi to see that the dispute gets settled. It would be of no value to be steadfast in holding to his teaching, and zealous in their '*defence and confirmation of the gospel*' (1:7), if they do not also get rid of '*rivalry or empty conceit*' (2:3) and have the mentality among themselves which was also in Christ Jesus (2:5). Jesus loves his church, and it is the way that he reaches our broken world. In becoming



# PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

- Are there any anxious thoughts that have been distracting you recently? Bring them before Jesus now, thanking him that he cares for us and promises to help us carry our burdens.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul moves from calling for his readers to be loving and united, to once again, calling them to rejoice in God. Unloving people will struggle to rejoice. In Galatians 5:22, Paul writes that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy... and love comes first.

The key to the joy Paul is calling Christ-followers to is not the same as happiness. It doesn't depend on circumstances or what happens to us, it is far deeper. That is why his admonishment is to rejoice 'in the Lord'. No matter what our circumstances are, we have access to Jesus. We never lose our connection to him, even if it may sometimes feel like it. In faith we know God is with us, God accepts us in Jesus, and our hope is an eternity with him. There is always reason to rejoice in God.

Paul also calls us to be difficult to offend, rather be gentle with all. In Galatians he refers to it as longsuffering. It is another fruit of the Spirit, along with love and joy. To be longsuffering means no matter how irritating or infuriating people or circumstances can be, God has gifted us a deeper level of patience and empathy. We react with moderation and promote peace in our relationships.

Anxiety is a problem in the heart and in the mind (verse 7). When we are anxious our feelings run away with us. Our minds start to imagine all sorts of things that might happen. Anxiety is a similar activity to praying and meditation in our minds and hearts. But anxiety is dwelling on what might happen without bringing it before God. Paul is reminding us, instead of allowing anxious thoughts to take hold, we should bring all our requests and concerns before God, with thanksgiving. The promise of peace in verse 7 depends on our obedience to the instructions of verses 4-6.





# WEEK SIX

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-4:23

# PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9



## BE WITH JESUS:

- Think about your thoughts over the last 24 hours and the last week. What have you been thinking most about?

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



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul has spoken a lot about the mind in his letter to the Philippians. Whether praying for knowledge and discernment, to charging us to have the same mind as Christ, to rebuking a dispute in the church as displaying different attitudes, Paul's whole letter has been aiming to cultivate a godly mind.

Now he charges his readers to be cognizant of what we feed our minds (4:8). He calls us to think about things that are true (factual, real, not lies or fake). This means that we need to be discerning of the news we allow to feed our minds and the need to be discerning with sources of information and media. When we focus primarily on God's word, we know it is truth above all. We will be wise in ensuring our reading of God's word proportionately outweighs everything else we let our minds consume.

*Noble* refers to what is good for a Christ-follower to consume. Not thoughtless, toxic media which makes light of others or is vulgar. In the same tone, Paul recommends thoughts that are *just* (fitting of how people should be treated) and *pure* (innocent, clean). *Lovely* and *admirable*, that which draws our affections and joy. Paul encourages us to be discerning of what we feed our mind, adding whatever is *excellent* and *praiseworthy* – that is beneficial to our minds. How much more important this is when our minds are consuming media input most of the day?

Paul then reminds them *thinking* (4:8) is followed by *doing* (4:9). *If you have noticed it as you have watched me, now you do the same!*

Just as joy, moderation and prayer would lead to peace (4:4–7), so the wise kind of lifestyle Paul has just mentioned will lead to peace. Our acceptance before God is guaranteed when we place our faith in the work of Jesus on the cross. God's love for us is unconditional. But the gift of peace is conditional. As with much of our discipleship, we need to practice obedience and wisdom in God to grow into his likeness.



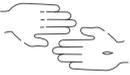
# PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13



## BE WITH JESUS:

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

- Are there people in your community who you are worried about? Pray about them now.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

The Philippians had sent Paul a gift and he wants to thank them for their kindness. He also wants them to know that he was content in God without the gift. He wanted them to feel his gratitude, while reassuring them that the source of his supply was God.

He reminds them that over his ministry life, he had experienced both great need and great providence, yet neither concerned him much. Rather, Paul rejoices because he has learned to be sufficient in God. Sometimes God places us in circumstances where we have much and other times where we have little, but in every circumstance, God has things to teach us and we can learn to trust him. This is worth rejoicing in, says Paul, because his experience has taught him that God never abandoned him.

If we process our circumstances like Paul has been teaching us, we too will observe that God never forsakes us, just like he promised. As we learn that God will always be with us, he is utterly trustworthy and we can be confident and sufficient under God, our levels of peace and joy rise. We are not at the mercy of every circumstance that comes along.

And, Paul concludes, God gives us a great capacity as a result. ***'I can do all this through him who gives me strength' (vs 13).***

Although our natural ability may be limited, yet God works in us and we are capable of achieving something for God because of him. Anything God calls us to do, we can because of his strength.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



# PHILIPPIANS 4:14-17



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

- What act of generosity has had you feeling deep gratitude to God and community?



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Having ensured they know it is both possible and better to be sufficient in God, Paul now ensures that the Philippians know he is grateful for their generosity.

His approach to financial matters is a good model for ministry. The call of God on your life to do his work should be what sustains you, not the motive of salary. The worker needs the salary but should not be too concerned about it. Paul demonstrates his dependency on God and his gratitude for his fellow helpers for their generosity. But his priorities are gratitude and dependency on God first. It is good discipling that he makes this clear to his readers so they too can follow his example in finding their primary sustenance through God.

He defines the Philippians' generosity as kind and good for the work of God. In this way, we can learn from the Philippians too. We, too, should be generous and give practically to the work of God in our lives and city. It never usurps the importance of God's empowering work, but it is good stewardship of the resources God has given us to sow into what he is doing around us.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



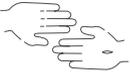
# PHILIPPIANS 4:18-20



## BE WITH JESUS:

*<sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

- Spend some time thanking God for his blessings in your life.
- Thank him for the generosity he has shown you through others.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul moves from his own gratitude and what the gift means to him, to their own benefit and what the gift will mean for them.

Generosity is rewarded by God in this life and the next. It is pleasing to God. A generous heart is a worshipful heart. God is delighted by us when we are motivated by generosity. It is like a young child doing something that is obviously copying what they have seen in their parent – it is sometimes funny, almost always delightful. Likewise, when we copy Jesus' behaviour and act in generosity towards others, we bring a smile to God's face. God accepts our acts of generosity as a sign of how much we wish to serve him.

Paul also says that generosity brings God's providence. As we are faithful, God is more faithful. God meets all our needs; not just perceived material needs. Indeed, he fulfils our most ultimate need – rescue from our sin and death. It is to God's glory that he is generous to us. It leads us to worship and adore him.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



# PHILIPPIANS 4:21-23



## BE WITH JESUS:

<sup>21</sup> Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. <sup>22</sup> All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. <sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.



## BECOME LIKE JESUS:

Paul wants to send a word of greeting to every Christ-follower in Philippi from himself and the Christ-followers who were with Paul.

The Christians everywhere had an interest in each other. They are a spiritual kingdom, a spiritual nation that reaches across all earthly nations. Through Paul's trials, he'd had opportunity to share the gospel, even to people working in Caesar's household.

All through the scriptures, we see people who are close to the kings and emperors having an impact – sometimes nationally – because they represent God to leaders who are not believers. Think of Nehemiah, Esther, Obadiah, Daniel, Joseph. Now believers who work for the Roman Caesar.

Many of these Christ-followers, even the ones 'in Caesar's household' eventually had to be willing to die for what they believed – and many of them did. Yet, that in turn drew the attention of the world. Many people turned to Jesus as a result of the bold witness of the early Christians. And still to this day – unbelievers are wooed to find out more when they see the depth of faith and its impact on behaviour in Christ-followers who display the behaviour Paul has been charging the Philippians (and us) to demonstrate.

Paul launched and closed his letter saying, 'Grace to you' (1:2) and lands it saying 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit (4:23)'.

From beginning to end, the Christian experience of God is a matter of grace. When we come to faith in Christ, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1), and a way of access into the experience of God's grace (Romans 5:2). The undeserved grace and mercy of God towards us sustains us. It is God's grace in our lives which brings us through every crisis. The Philippians had many anxieties, from their apostle being in prison, to opposition from city leaders in Philippi. Just being part of Rome meant calling Jesus 'Lord' would place them constantly in danger. Paul reminds them to live in the grace of God.

Paul's entire message to them has been about Jesus. Jesus, who came in the form of a servant, but is now highly exalted and has the name that is above every name, will continue to impart his grace to them. Their one aim must be to be 'found' in Christ. If they are found in him, they will experience his grace and peace.

Notice too, Paul does not simply say 'with you'. He says 'with your spirits'. Paul means our inner communication and intimacy with God. These Philippians might be put into prison as Paul was, yet no one could touch or harm their relationship to God. No one could stop them praying in their hearts and minds. No one could stop the ever-flowing presence of God giving them strength and joy. This is Paul's great wish for the Philippians and should be our great longing for ourselves.

If we know God in such a way, nothing else that happens to us can disturb our inner peace and contentment when our source is Jesus. If we know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship he gives us amidst every form of suffering, it will be enough for us.

Soon, Jesus will come from heaven and transform us altogether into his likeness completely. Meanwhile we live on his grace.

- What in today's Scripture and considerations struck you about how you can become more like Jesus?



**DO WHAT JESUS DID:**

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15)*

- Spend some time thanking God for this journey through Philippians and all he has said to you in it.
- Ask him to bring to mind some areas he wants to bring to light more in your life.
- Why not go through your personal testimony again now, and thank God for how he has walked with you to this point?

**THOUGHTS:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





