

Philippians

Citizens of Heaven

Women's Bible Study // Christian Assembly Church

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Introduction

“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.” - Philippians 3:20 (NLT)

Citizenship is a big deal. If you have ever tried to become a citizen of another country, you know the long legal process that one can undergo to be selected, or not selected, and the great strain, duress, cost and toll it can take on your life in the waiting. Being a citizen of a country comes with a set of inherent rights and privileges that a person receives by being deemed a national of that country.

It's no wonder that God talks about where our true citizenship lies, lest we forget and spend our life chasing a temporary status that is meaningless in the end. Our citizenship in Jesus Christ is eternal, and it is the most precious gift we could have ever hoped for. It is in essence, the truest thing about us. Our citizenship through Jesus Christ is ultimately in HEAVEN. Let that sink in.

This means that earth is not our home, which has huge implications for the way we live both here and now. The Bible talks about this concept in Hebrews 11 with the hall of fame of faithful followers:

*“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”
-Hebrews 11:13-16 (NIV)*

We too are invited to live as people longing for a better country- *a heavenly one*.

One of the main questions of citizenship comes down to knowing who you are and where you come from. The world tells us lies about who we are and who we should be, and all of this can have a profound impact on our sense of self, worth and identity. The truth is that our identities are given to us from God Himself, they are His gift to us. We don't need to earn our identity or create it, we need to RECEIVE it in Christ and then simply LIVE in it.

God's Word tells us that we are CITIZENS OF HEAVEN. Dear friends, get ready to journey together into all that means in the book of Philippians!

Week 1:

Partnership

Philippians 1:1-11 (NLT)

This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus.

I am writing to all of God's holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons.

2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, 5 for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

7 So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. 8 God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.

9 I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. 10 For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. 11 May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

Teaching Notes: Week 1

Partnership | Philippians 1:1-11 (NLT)

Week 2:

Joy

Philippians 1:12-30 (NLT)

12 And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. 13 For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. 14 And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.

15 It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. 16 They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. 17 Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. 18 But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. 19 For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance.

20 For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. 21 For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. 22 But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. 23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.

25 Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. 26 And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.

27 Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28 Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. 29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. 30 We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

Week 2 Memory Verse

"Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ."

Philippians 1:27a

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. In verses 12-14 what does Paul say is the result of his imprisonment? What strikes you about Paul's attitude toward his suffering? Is there anything hard happening in your life right now that God might be using for good?
2. How would you describe the two groups of people that Paul is talking about in verses 15-19? Can you list out their differences? Why does Paul rejoice over both groups?
3. In verse 20 Paul declares that he fully expects and hopes to never be ashamed and will continue to be bold for Christ. Consider this for a moment. Do you ever experience feelings of embarrassment or shame? If so, where do they come from? How might God be inviting you to be BOLD this week?
4. Paraphrase verses 21-26 in your own words. What is Paul's main point?

Teaching Notes: Week 2

Joy I Philippians 1:12-30 (NLT)

Week 3:

Attitude

Philippians 2:1-11 (NLT)

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

*6 Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.*

*7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.*

*When he appeared in human form,
8 he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,*

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

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

Week 3 Memory Verse

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had."

Philippians 2:6

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

4. This next part is for your reflection- you do not need to write these answers down, rather feel free to ponder them with grace for yourself in the hope of self awareness. There is space to doodle any notes or thoughts that might be helpful to hold onto.

- i. How does selfishness play itself out in your current life?
- ii. Where do you feel the need to be impressive? Why do you think that is?
- iii. Is there an area in your life where you are prone to think of yourself as better than others?
- iv. Where do you feel the need to protect your own interest above others?
- v. Is there anyone around you whose interests you have neglected?

5. In your own words, describe Jesus' attitude according to verses 6-8. List out all the sacrifices that Jesus made in these verses. Pause to worship Him for His humility, sacrifice and obedience to the Father.

6. What is the reward that Jesus received for His sacrifice (v.9-11)?

Teaching Notes: Week 3

Attitude I Philippians 2:1-11 (NLT)

Week 4:

Obedience

Philippians 2:14- 30 (NLT)

12 Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

14 Do everything without complaining and arguing, 15 so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. 16 Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return, I will be proud that I did not run the race in vain and that my work was not useless. 17 But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to share that joy. 18 Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.

19 If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. 20 I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. 21 All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. 22 But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. 23 I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. 24 And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

25 Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. 26 I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. 27 And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

28 So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. 29 Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. 30 For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away.

Week 4 Memory Verse

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. In verse 12 Paul instructs believers to "*work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.*" How does our deep and reverent obedience show the results of our salvation? What is the difference between working hard *for our salvation* and working to show *the results of our salvation*?
2. What desire does Paul say God gives us (v.13)? Does this come from ourselves?
3. Write out verse 14. On a scale of 1-10, rank yourself honestly on how you are doing with that command. Why does Paul say we should not argue or complain?
4. What does it look like for you to "*hold firmly to the word of life*" (v.16)?

5. Describe in your own words the source of Paul's joy. What strikes you most about his attitude? What questions or thoughts come to mind regarding joy in the midst of difficulties?

6. For what does Paul commend Timothy and Epaphroditus? Write down the phrases or characteristics that apply to each:

Timothy _____ Epaphroditus _____

7. What in this passage jumped out to you the most and why? How can your group pray for you this week, based on what you read?

Teaching Notes: Week 4

Obedience | Philippians 2:12-30 (NLT)

Week 5:

Faith

Philippians 3:1-11 (NLT)

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

2 Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. 3 For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, 4 though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

5 I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. 6 I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault.

7 I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ 9 and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, 11 so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

Week 5 Memory Verse

"Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ"

Philippians 3:8

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. What does it mean to “safeguard” your faith (v.1)? How do you think rejoicing accomplishes this?
2. Who does Paul encourage believers to watch out for (v.2)? What are they telling others they must do, and why is that so detrimental to faith in Jesus?
3. Why do you think that people believed they had to be circumcised to be saved? Can you think of any modern day examples of things people believe they need to do, outside of believing in Jesus, to be saved? Why is this dangerous?
4. Paul lists all the reasons that he would have been justified through human effort, if that’s what mattered. List out those reasons below. (v. 5-6)

5. In your own words, summarize what Paul is saying in verses 7-9. This is the center of Paul's teaching and the very heart of following Jesus.

6. How would you describe your own faith? Have you counted everything else as worthless in comparison to knowing Jesus? Is there anything else that holds power over you?

7. What two desires does Paul express in verse 10 and 11? Paul knows that it is through our suffering and weakness that we are able to fully experience the power of God in our life. What could this mean for your own current suffering?

Teaching Notes: Week 5

Faith | Philippians 3:1-11 (NLT)

Week 6:

Perseverance

Philippians 3:12- 21 (NLT)

12 I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.

13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

15 Let all who are spiritually mature agree on these things. If you disagree on some point, I believe God will make it plain to you. 16 But we must hold on to the progress we have already made.

17 Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. 18 For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. 20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. 21 He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.

Week 6 Memory Verse

"Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

Philippians 3:13-14

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. In verse 1, Paul talks about "*pressing on to possess the perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.*" What do you think this means? (You may want to look up the verse in different Bible translations to get an idea of what Paul is saying.)
2. Describe the one thing Paul focuses on. Think about where your own focus goes these days. What do you think he refers to when he says, "receive the heavenly prize"? (v.14)
3. Paul invites us to join him in the race of following Jesus, that is, to make faith in Christ alone our primary focus. He challenges us to agree on it and be of one mind and focus together. Why do you think division over where to focus can be dangerous (remember the argument over circumcision earlier in the chapter)?
4. List the type of conduct that Paul considers to be an enemy of the cross (v.19). Does anything in this list convict you?

Teaching Notes: Week 6

Perseverance | Philippians 3:12-21 (NLT)

Week 7:

Rejoice!

Philippians 4:1-9 (NLT)

4 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

2 Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. 3 And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News. They worked along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are written in the Book of Life.

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. 9 Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Week 7 Memory Verse

"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!"

Philippians 4:4

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. What do you think it means to stay true to the Lord (v.1)?
2. What do you think it means when Paul refers to the people of Philippi as being his joy and the crown he receives for his work? Have you ever experienced a similar feeling through serving or ministering to others? What were the circumstances of your service?
3. Write down everything you learn about Euodia and Syntyche in verses 2-4 (their relationship with Paul, their work, their current situation...). What is Paul's request to them and to those in their community? How can their situation apply to you today?
4. Write out verse 4 in the space below. What would it look like to apply this verse to your life today? Are there any challenges or resistances within you to this command?

5. Verse 6 is a great practical tool for life. Use the space below to record two of your anxieties in this season. In the middle column transform the anxieties into prayers before God. Then on the far right, use this space to record answered prayers as God responds to your needs.

Anxiety	Prayer	Praise
Example: Financial security	Lord thank you that you have always provided for my needs. I feel scared about the future, but I trust you and ask you to provide for everything I need. You are able. Amen	Thank you that I was able to pay all my bills this month!

6. Verse 7 is another treasured promise to God's children, "*The peace of Christ will guard your heart and mind as you live in Jesus.*" How does this truth impact you today?

7. After talking about anxiety, Paul gives his friends a means of leaning into the peace of Christ by focusing their thoughts (v.8-9). Write down some thoughts that are true, honorable, right, pure and admirable. Here are a few examples.....

I am God's beloved daughter

I have everything I need

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

God is near to the broken hearted

Nothing is impossible with Christ

Teaching Notes: Week 7

Rejoice! | Philippians 4:1-19 (NLT)

Week 8:

Contentment

Phillipians 4:10-23 (NLT)

10 How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. 11 Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. 12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13 For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. 14 Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty.

15 As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. 16 Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. 17 I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness.

18 At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

20 Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen.

21 Give my greetings to each of God's holy people—all who belong to Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send you their greetings. 22 And all the rest of God's people send you greetings, too, especially those in Caesar's household.

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

Week 8 Memory Verse

*"And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches,
which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 4:19

Write out the memory verse above in the space below. Say it aloud as you write to help it stick in your brain and heart.

What does this passage mean to you today?

Questions:

1. What does Paul praise the Lord for (v.10)?
2. What is Paul's secret to contentment and strength (v.11-13)? How does this work?
3. How does Paul describe his relationship with the Philippians (v.15-16)? How is his relationship with them unique among the churches he planted?
4. What do you think is the difference between volunteering/donating and entering into partnership with someone?
5. What might Paul want to emphasize about God's generosity with the phrases, "*from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus*"(v.19)?

Teaching Notes: Week 8
Contentment | Philippians 4:10-23 (NLT)

