

life
group
*Life together for the
Kingdom of God*


MeadowBrook
CHURCH

Historical Background

Philippi was located in Macedonia and is recorded in Acts as a “Roman Colony” (Acts 16:12), meaning “its free citizens enjoyed Roman citizenship.”¹ The Philippians “replicated Rome’s culture of status and honor at every turn,” and they cherished their citizenship, also embracing the Imperial Cult.² This helps one see how Paul’s frequent Roman references were used to encourage and persuade the Philippians. Apart from knowledge of this deep love for Rome, Roman culture, and status, the reader cannot fully understand the significance of Paul using emperor terms to refer to Christ (2:11), references to a heavenly citizenship (3:20), and the peace of God (4:7) in contrast with the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace through widespread conquests).³ The importance of status for the Philippians helps the reader understand the danger of the Judaizers⁴ and Paul’s usage of δούλος (doo-los; slave/servant) referring to Jesus. Circumcision was connected to status in the Jewish culture. The 1st century Jewish historian, Josephus, recorded that one could not worship God properly if uncircumcised, nor could one “be thoroughly a Jew unless he was circumcised.”⁵ Paul understood this threat so he was very direct in his warning to the Philippians. Josephus’ reference to slaves as “the scum, the spurious and abortive offspring of our nation” and the fact that slaves held “the most degrading legal status in the Roman world” gives significant weight to Paul’s example of Christ who took on the form of the slave.⁶ It was this love for status and temporary honor that was impeding the Philippians from following the example seen in God and walking in a manner worthy of the gospel.

Literary Flow of Philippians

Paul’s letter displays a purposeful flow from beginning to end. He introduces his main idea in 1:27-28a where he challenges his readers to “walk in a manner worthy of the gospel.” In this thesis, one discerns his two main applications of the letter—stand firm against false teachers and be unified. These are later dealt with in chapters 3 and 4, introduced by “finally” at the beginning of chapter 3. Philippians 2:1-11 marks the beginning Paul’s body of the letter and immediately follows his thesis statement. It is in this passage where he sets forth the example the Philippians are to follow, which is each member of the Trinity with the focus being on Christ himself. Chapter 2:1-11 establishes the model to be God, while 2:12-30 establishes the means to be God as well. Paul writes in 2:13 that “it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Then Paul provides 3 examples of God working in someone—himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. At this point, Paul finally applies the model of God and the work of God to their lives by explaining how to deal with false teaching and to be unified in the church. Paul then closes in the reverse order he opened the letter by describing his context, giving thanks for the Philippians, and delivering final greetings.

Key Themes

- The unity and humility of believers, and the resulting joy.
- The importance of fellowshiping with other believers.
- The deity and humanity of Christ.
- The model and means for the Christian life.
- Prayer in the life of a believer.
- Salvation by grace through faith, not by any work of the law.
- The sanctified life.

¹ All scripture quotes are from the ESV unless noted otherwise; Gene L. Green, *The World of the New Testament*, ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 541.

² Hellerman, “ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ as a Signifier of Social Status In Philippians 2:6,” 782; Hansen, 3.

³ Ibid, 3.

⁴ Paul’s warning in Chapter 3 is much more in line with the rebukes Paul made to the Judaizers in Galatians than later threats, see Silva, 4. See also an example of Polycarp warning against the teachings of the later heresy Gnosticism in his letter to the Philippians. Polycarp *Letter to the Philippians* 7.1, trans. Massey Hamilton Shepherd Jr. under the title *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.: 1970), 134.

⁵ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.38-46, trans. William Whiston under the title of *The Works of Josephus*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson: 1987). Logos.

⁶ Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5.443. trans. William Whiston under the title of *The Works of Josephus*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson: 1987). Logos; Hellerman, “ΜΟΡΦΗ ΘΕΟΥ as a Signifier of Social Status In Philippians 2:6,” *JETS* 52/4 (2009), 784.

Life Group – Acts 16:6-34; Philippians 1:1 – September 2, 2018

The Church at Philippi

Connect

Based on the whole counsel of Scripture, what does a healthy church look like to you? *But* you can only use one word.

Grow: Highlight and Examine the Text

Read Acts 16:6-34 in its entirety and read Philippians 1:1.

- *How did this church come about?*
- *Who made up this church?*
- *What united them?*
- *How did they organize themselves and carry out ministry?*
- *How did they steward their resources that God gave them?*

Serve: Apply the Text

- *What are tangible ways motivated by the gospel that we can seek to promote diversity in age, race, and nationality at MeadowBrook?*
- *How do we as a Life Group carry out the scriptural mandates for ministry in the church?*
- *What resources has God given us that can be used to serve his kingdom most effectively?*

Pray: Respond to the Text

- *Pray for the unity of MeadowBrook.*
- *Pray for Pastor Randy and others as they lead our church.*
- *Pray for the gospel ministries of MeadowBrook.*
- *Pray for all the saints at MeadowBrook, with the pastors and deacons, as we carry out the ministry of this church and steward the resources God has given them. Pray for joy, wisdom, and obedience.*

Multiply: Make Disciples

God sovereignly builds his church *through his people proclaiming his gospel* in the power of the Holy Spirit. “Therefore, we are God’s ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” This Fall, make a conscious decision to engage in the disciple-making ministry of Christ.

Prepare for Next Week:

Read Philippians 1:1-11. See what characteristics of God and of mankind are revealed in the text, and ask yourself how these can impact your life immediately and move you to live a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Memorize the Text

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21, ESV)

Life Group – Acts 16:6-34; Philippians 1:1 – September 2, 2018

The Church at Philippi

(Quick note: really seek to cover every heading on the first page during this lesson, spending the biggest chunk on the application questions and prayer points.)

The Church at Philippi, and every church before or after, was brought about by the Sovereignty of God.

If it weren't for God preventing Paul from going to Asia, or him opening the heart of Lydia to pay attention to Paul, or miraculously rescuing Paul and Silas from prison in way that led to the jailer's conversion, the Church at Philippi would not have existed. No one at MeadowBrook is here by accident. The Spirit has sovereignly worked in the lives of individuals to lead them to salvation at which they were baptized into the invisible Church of Jesus on the basis of the their new relationship with their redeemer. The Spirit also has led those individuals to connect to the local body here at MeadowBrook, which is the visible expression of the invisible church. No one is here by accident. God has a significant plan and purpose for his church at MeadowBrook.

The Church at Philippi was made up with people from diverse backgrounds, yet all were saints on equal standing before God.

Lydia was a wealthy woman from Asia, who sold fine clothing to the elite. As a result of Paul's preaching, Lydia repented and believed in the gospel along with her friends and family. The jailer was the blue-collar local who, after a miraculous set of circumstances, repented and believed in the gospel, along with his family. And it is likely, though not certain, that the young slave girl who had been exploited her entire life and tormented by demons, repented and believed in the gospel as well. These were the charter members of the church at Philippi, and they could not have been more diverse. The gospel alone brought them together. Only a deep grasp of the truth that our righteousness and standing before God is not based on ourselves but on Christ could bring a group of people as diverse as this together. All believers, regardless of their past, are saints in Christ Jesus. This truth alone transcends race, gender, nationality, and economic status, and should urge us to promote and celebrate the diversity that divides the world but is on display in beautiful unity in the church.

The Church at Philippi was to be unified by a common purpose—the Gospel; they all were servants of Christ Jesus.

Along with the grace of the gospel, the mission of the gospel unified them. The church at Philippi were partners in the gospel with Paul and Timothy and like them both they were all servants of Christ just like they were saints.

MeadowBrook is unified by the grace that God shows us and we seek to be unified in common purpose as we seek to make disciples of all nations. This can be seen in our Mission Statement:

"MeadowBrook seeks to CONNECT people to Christ and His church, GROW them as disciples to be disciplers, and equip them to SERVE through missions, ministry and worship, all to GLORIFY God."

The Church at Philippi organized themselves and carried out ministry according to the plan of God revealed in his word given through the apostles.

God has not left us alone to figure out how he wants us to carry out the mission of the church. He has given clear instruction in his word and was giving instruction through the words of the Apostles as they were leading the early church. God has given the pastors/elders/overseers to teach and lead the church, exercising oversight and shepherding the flock according to God's word with integrity. This is who the church members give authority to and are called by the word of God in Hebrews 13:17 to obey and submit to as they keep watch over your souls according to the pattern set forth by God's word. A departure from that pattern is a departure from the position of pastor/overseer/elder, and pastors who depart from teaching and living the truth should not be listened to. God has also given deacons to serve and protect the unity of the church, empowering and enabling the elders/pastors/overseers to better teach and lead the congregation, (see Acts 6). Lastly, God has made all believers to be a part of his body and has called them to carry out his ministry. Ministry is not reserved for the spiritually "elite." God graciously gifts *all believers* with skills, talents, resources, and special gifts given by the Spirit for the purpose of building up the church. God expects and commands *all believers* to use these gifts and resources to serve and build up one another. (See Eph. 4, 1 Cor. 12 & 14, and 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

The Church at Philippi used their resources to serve the purposes of the kingdom of God.

Lydia immediately used her home to serve kingdom purposes, and later on in Philippians we hear of their generosity towards kingdom ministry. Notice that wealth is not condemned. Paul doesn't chide Lydia for her wealth and say that she must be poor to be holy. Wealth is not sinful; however, a love of money and poor stewardship of resources is sinful. MeadowBrook has been blessed with incredible resources—tangible and intangible. Will we leverage our resources for the eternal purposes of the Kingdom or waste them on the temporary pursuits of this world?

Life Group – Vision Series: Connect – September 9, 2018

Life Groups exist to *connect* people to Jesus Christ and His Church through consistent evangelism, follow-up and fellowship.

Connect people to Christ and his church by sharing the gospel with the lost.

Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.

(Acts 28:28 ESV)

¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. ¹⁹ For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. ²³ I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:16-23 ESV)

Quick points:

- We share the gospel for the glory of God and the good of others.
- We do not share the gospel because we feel guilty for not sharing enough, but we share the gospel because of how wonderful the grace of God has been revealed in our own lives. As always, grace, not guilt, is the motivator. Our righteousness is found in Christ alone.
- Sharing the gospel requires hard work, but we cannot do the work of conversion. Only the Spirit can bring that about, and we do not know whom he is preparing for salvation. We are called simply to share the message of salvation with which we have been entrusted.
- In Scripture, we are called to share the gospel with people with whom we have relationships and with people with whom we do not. Both can and have been effective throughout church history.

What areas of your life is God specifically calling you to be active in evangelizing others? (Circle them)

Family **Friends** **Work Life** **Neighborhood** **Other:** _____

Who has God placed on your heart to begin seeking out with the gospel?

How can we as a Life Group grow in evangelizing others?

What specific steps do we need to take to carry out this mission?

Connect people to Christ and his church by following up with them in discipleship and moving them through our church membership process.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near... Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 10:24-25; 13:17 ESV)

So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. (1 Corinthians 14:12 ESV)

Throughout the New Testament, both the universal and local church are discussed often. The universal church is made up of all followers of Jesus from all places and all times. The local church is a collective group of believers that organize themselves under the authority of pastors who submit to Jesus, teach God's word, and lead the people of God in the worship of God.

Some quick points:

- God has established his church to continue his mission on this earth in the power of the Spirit.
- Members are called to submit to the pastors of the local church as they submit to the Lord and will give an account. Members are not to submit to every church leader, just the local church they have joined in fellowship. Likewise, pastors will give an account for how they lead the members of their churches.
- A healthy church family builds each other up lovingly pointing out sin in each other's lives and journeying on the road of repentance and holiness together, while also encouraging one another.
- Members are commanded by God to use their spiritual gifts to build up the church.

If you have not joined MeadowBrook yet, why not?

Once someone repents of their sins and displays faith in Christ, encourage them to be baptized at MeadowBrook and walk with them through our process of church membership. (1. Dinner at Randy's (heavy Life Group emphasis), 2. Membership Luncheon [required], and 3. Ministry Connection)

Who are people who have drifted from our church and have not connected to another church that we need to follow-up with? _____

Connect people to Christ and his church by connecting them to the community of Life Group and having regular time spent together outside of Sunday morning.

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47 ESV)

What are some ways our Life Group can fellowship together this fall? Keep in mind church-wide fellowships like the Thanksgiving dinner.

Life Group – Philippians 1:1-11 – September 16, 2018

The Results of God Working in You

CONNECT

Are there any ongoing projects you have that have yet to be completed? How do you feel when you finish a project that has occupied your mind and time for a long time?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 1:1-11

(Additional Passages: Acts 16; Rom. 6; 3:20-21; Mk. 12:30-31; 1 Pet. 4:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:40-58; Jn. 10)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for the spiritual needs of your Life Group. If possible, pray for areas where growth in righteousness is needed. Pray that each other's love would abound in knowledge and discernment and that it would be revealed in righteousness and gospel ministry.

The Philippians were partners in the gospel with Paul and partakers of the saving grace God gives. Pray for those in your circles who are lost that they would experience this grace that God gives *as a result of your gospel ministry. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.*

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Phil. 1:6-11 and discuss how God continually works in the lives of believers from salvation, throughout their lives, and into eternity.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 1:12-30. Pay special attention to Paul's perspective and his purpose and in what manner he is urging the Philippians to walk.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 1:1-11 – September 16, 2018

The Results of God Working in You

What do we learn about God in this passage?

In this passage, we see the complete picture of God's saving and sovereign grace in our lives. Salvation in its broadest sense encompasses regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. God saves us from our body of death and gives new life (regeneration), God saves us from the penalty of sin and declares us righteous (justification), God saves us from the practice and power of sin and produces in us the fruit of righteousness (sanctification), and ultimately, God will save us from the presence and effects of sin and give us glorified bodies that will reign with him in eternity (glorification). This work he does in us is a good work! The only way to receive it is through faith by his wonderful grace.

- **God begins the work in us.** He regenerates and justifies us. We no longer have any fear of judgment because of the life God has given us. We are declared right before God. Paul rightly calls the Philippians "saints" because, in Christ, that is what we are. We have been born again and as a result of the work of Christ have been given his righteousness in a beautiful and merciful exchange. God through his Spirit opens our hearts and eyes so that we may respond to him in faith. It is a wonderful act of grace. We didn't move to God first. He sought us out!
- **God continues the work in us.** God continues the work of salvation in us by conforming us into the image of his Son. His Spirit works in us to move us to put to death the ways of the flesh and put on Christ. This work of God in us produces the fruit of righteousness. We must not become arrogant in our spiritual walk. The same grace that saved us, sanctifies us. We should humbly recognize and yield to the work of God in our lives.
- **God completes the work in us.** God will keep his children until the end. In Christ, there is rock solid assurance of salvation *that is evidenced in the way we live*. Those whom God has justified will show evidences of sanctification. Our assurance is in the saving grace of God that transforms lives and never leaves his children, not in a prayer that was said or a baptism. There are many who have prayed a prayer and have been baptized, who will experience an eternity of agony, not because they lost their salvation—they were never saved to begin with! But, for those in Christ we have a great hope that we will one day be glorified as Christ is glorified, and God will dwell with us forever.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We are slaves of Christ Jesus.** Paul begins the letter by identifying himself and Timothy as slaves of Christ, setting the tone for the entire letter. The Philippians were consumed with the Roman honor culture, but Christ's followers were to demonstrate humility that results in unity. Sinful pride has no place in the Kingdom of God.
- **We are to exist in community in the local church.** Paul connects the believers at Philippi with the church leaders there. It is important to note that believers are supposed to live and operate in the context of a local church. Believers *should officially join* the church and submit to the leadership God has appointed to lead his church. It is not enough to attend, give, and even serve. We are called to formally commit through membership to a local church, and it should mean something. We should attend faithfully, engage in and support the ministry, and submit to the leaders and hold one another accountable.

If there are members of your group who have not joined MeadowBrook, approach them individually and ask them why they haven't and discern whether you should encourage them to commit through membership. (See 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47; DesiringGod has good resources as well as Gospel Coalition and Christianity Today)

- **As a result of our salvation, we are partners in gospel ministry and partakers of grace—no matter the situation.**⁷ “Assurance of salvation is not an excuse for laziness. It should lead us to persevere, and we can do so with hope because God graciously provides the desire and power for endurance.”⁸ Our salvation should move us to spread the gospel message and rely on the grace of God to sustain us in both the good and trying times.
- **We are called to love others in the truth of God’s Word.** Love that is separated from the truth of God’s word and the righteousness it produces is not true love. (See below)

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *God is working in you to make you a gospel minister who abounds in true love towards others for the glory of God.*

- **Let the grace of God motivate you.** Grace, not guilt or selfish ambition, should be the motivation for the believer. “In Christ, there is nothing you could do to make him love you more and nothing you have done that makes him love you any less.”⁹ This grace does not produce laziness or more sin, but gratitude based works of righteousness.
- **Be a gospel minister.** Share the gift of Christ with others. *How are we doing at this?*
- **Show true love to others.**
 - o True love is marked by the knowledge of the truth of God’s Word. Idly allowing someone to live contrary to God’s word is not love, but hatred.
 - o True love is marked by the wisdom of discernment. For example, sometimes it is best to withhold what someone wants than it is to give it to them.
 - o True love approves what is excellent. Using the knowledge of God’s word and discernment, we approve what is excellent and devote energy there. This may mean saying no to other avenues of love at the moment.
 - o True love results in righteous living. If sin is the fruit, then it is not love. Period.
- **Do all for the glory of God through the power of Christ.** Our life mission is to glorify God and enjoy him through the power of Christ. Don’t seek your own glory. Reflect God’s glory to creation and thus fulfill your original purpose.

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Participate in or create ministry that advances the gospel.** The Spirit has brought you to MeadowBrook to engage in gospel ministry. He might have brought you here to create ministries that we do not currently do.
- **Demonstrate love for God by loving the church and engaging in corporate worship.** Not everything in water is a fish, but all fish are in water. Even though not everyone in church truly loves God, all those who love God love his church.
- **Demonstrate love for others by serving faithfully as a group.** *What are ways your Life Group can serve in the community over the Holiday Season?*
- **Demonstrate love for one another by praying for one another.** Look at Paul’s prayer for the Philippians. His prayers were gratitude over partnered ministry and petitions for each other’s righteousness. Prayers for physical needs and sickness are fine, but seek to pray for the spiritual needs of each other and ways that the gospel could be advanced.

In what areas does your Life Group need to grow?

⁷ Merida, 29.

⁸ Merida, 30.

⁹ J.D. Greear, Gospel Prayer.

Life Group – Philippians 1:12-30 – September 23, 2018

The Perspective and Purpose Behind the Gospel-Worthy Life

CONNECT

What is something that you have done where the purpose was not clear at first, but when you figured it out you were glad that you had done it?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 1:12-30

(Additional Passages: Acts 5:40-41; Rev. 21-22; Gen. 1:27; Mt. 22:34-40, 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 15:51-57)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for the spiritual needs of your Life Group. If possible, pray for areas where deliverance is needed. Pray that MeadowBrook and this life group would stand firm in one spirit in unity and for truth. Pray against disunity and for boldness when opposition arises.

Paul urged the Philippians to strive together in the work of the gospel. Pray for those in your circles who are lost, that they would experience this grace that God gives *as a result of your gospel work. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.*

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Phil. 1:21 and discuss the purpose God has for us in this life and the reward he has for believers in the next life. Talk about a concrete daily impact this has on your family.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 2:1-11. Pay special attention to the model Christ sets and how that impacts the way the we live with one another.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

⁵ *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,* ⁷ *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)*

Life Group – Philippians 1:12-30 – September 23, 2018

The Perspective and Purpose Behind the Gospel-Worthy Life

In this passage, we learn about the context that Paul and the Philippians are in. Paul is imprisoned for the gospel, and the Philippians are in danger of letting disunity from within and opposition from without disrupt their obedience to the life that which God has called them—the gospel-worthy life. Paul connects truths about God to truths about the Philippians in order to show them how they can prevent that disruption from occurring on an individual and communal level.

What do we learn about God in this passage?

- **God can use any situation we are in to advance his gospel and his purposes.** There is nothing in your life that God cannot use to advance the gospel. Over and over again in scripture we see God use the worst events one could imagine in order to advance his kingdom and purposes. Joseph serves as a great example in the Old Testament as to how God used his slavery and wrongful imprisonment to protect and provide for the people of God. *Do you have situations in your life, though painful, that could be used by God to advance the gospel?*
- **God works all situations out for our deliverance, either through life or death.** Paul confidently asserts that with the help of the Spirit, the situation will turn out for his deliverance whether he lives or dies. God will deliver the believer from every evil in this world in this life or in the next. There is no promise of definite deliverance from evil on this earth, and if someone says otherwise they are a false teacher. Sometimes we experience deliverance (healing, relief from persecution, etc.) when we die. *Do you trust God in regard to this truth?*
- **God has granted it to us that we should believe in him and share in the suffering of Christ in this life.** God is so gracious that he pours out his grace into us that we may believe in Christ and experience eternal life, but that does not mean a life free from suffering now. Over and over again in the gospels Jesus revealed just the opposite, and Paul reiterates that here now. We *get to* share in the sufferings of Christ. It is an honor to suffer on account of his name that should lead us to rejoice (Acts 5:40-41).
- **God has something better waiting for us when we die.** We experience suffering in this world on account of Christ, because this world is not our home. Pause here and read Rev. 21 and 22 and be reminded of our future home. For those of us in Christ, we will experience the resurrection as Christ did and...
 - o We will dwell with God as his people. We will know him fully and face to face.
 - o There will be no more tears, death, sickness, or any residue of the effects of sin.
 - o We will not experience temptation ever again.
 - o We will be fully satisfied in the glory and goodness of God.
 - o We will know nothing more of futility. We will be home at last.

"I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now...Come further up, come further in!"—C.S. Lewis

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We can have joy in any situation, if we have the right perspective and purpose.** When our perspective is eternal and our purpose aligns with God's purpose for our life, joy results no matter the circumstance. Paul knew God's purpose for his life and it was clear: To live is Christ, which was revealed by the fruitful labor that he did for the good of others. *Does your purpose in this life align with what God has defined as your purpose? Is your perspective focused on the eternal or the temporary?*
- **We are not supposed to be the central focus of our lives.** It should go without saying at this point, but *this life is not about you or me.* It is about Christ. He is the hero, not us.

- **We have no need to fear death.** Because we know that God has something for us after this life, we have no need to fear death whatsoever. Christ has decidedly defeated death on the cross and in his resurrection, and has given us this same victory through our faith in him. (1 Cor. 15:51-57)

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *Let your faith in the deliverance that will be brought about by the Spirit move you to live the gospel-worthy life in every circumstance.*

- **Believe the promise of God.** The first step for the believer is never to do, but to believe. Romans 14:23b says that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. If faith is not our starting point, then whatever results, no matter how noble or good we think it is, will be sin. Let that sink in. I (Hunter) find it helpful that whenever I struggle to believe the promises of God for my life to reflect on the incarnation. God had promised that he would send the Messiah and that he would do certain things while on earth, and God kept every single promise he made. This helps to trust God with the promises he has made that have yet to come to pass, i.e. the deliverance that will be brought about by the Spirit in life or in death.
- **Know your purpose in life.** Challenge your group to think about and write down their purpose in this life as God defines it. Share this with them to help serve as a helpful guide.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-resolutions-of-jonathan-edwards>
- **Live out your purpose with others.** Once you understand God's purpose for your life, live that out with others. God never meant for this to be done alone. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the benefits and the role community plays in him living out his purpose (discussed below). Life Group is not meant to be a weekly gathering, but a place where believers can live out *each day* their God-given purpose together for the kingdom and glory of God.

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Spur one another on to greater kingdom work.** Let the joy of others in their victories and the perseverance of others in their trials impart courage to you so that you are bolder in your witness. Also, share testimonies of God's goodness in the good and bad circumstances so that others can likewise be encouraged.
- **Pray for one another in meaningful ways.** Men, know the heart needs and struggles of the men in your group and pray diligently. Ladies, do likewise for the ladies in your group. Pray for the spiritual. Praying for the physical is good, but praying for the spiritual is better.
- **Seek the spiritual growth and joy in the faith of each other.** Be selfless in how you view ministry. Seek to serve and invest in others in ways that produce greater spiritual growth and joy *for them*. In doing that, you will find greater growth and joy than if you were focused solely on yourself. Be others-focused.
- **Stand firm in one spirit.** Unity and firmness amidst opposition is crucial to living the gospel-worthy life. The enemy loves when the people of God are not unified and when the people of God compromise truth to avoid opposition. Let neither of these be true of any of our Life Groups or of our church.
- **Strive together for the work of the gospel.** Three things here. First, do the work of the gospel. In response to the beautiful grace God has shown us, share Christ with others. There is no need to be motivated by guilt. Be motivated by the grace and glory of God. If people are not being saved, baptized, and joining the church as a result of your Life Group, repent and confess that sin, experience the grace of the Lord, and go tell others about him! Second, strive! Gospel work is not easy. It requires hard work. Just as you work hard at your job during the week, work hard to introduce people to Jesus. Lastly, strive together. Don't do it alone. Invite people to pray for those you are sharing with, share Christ together, and rejoice together when God brings someone to faith.

In which of these does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Philippians 2:1-11 – September 30, 2018

The Model of Christian Unity

CONNECT

Have you ever tried to build something, or put something together, or even do a puzzle without a model to look at or instructions? How did that turn out?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 2:1-11

(Additional Passages: Jn. 3:16; 21:15-19; 2 Cor 1; Matt. 5:2-11; 1 Jn. 3:18; Rom. 13:9-21; Jas. 1:19-21)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time together as a Life Group to praise God for who he is and what he has done. Do this by sentence praying aloud as a group.

Pray for the unity of our church. Pray that we would follow the model of the Father, Son, and Spirit revealed in Philippians 2:1-11 and that we would excel in showing humility toward and serving one another.

Pray for those who are lost that they might repent and believe in the gospel, surrendering to Christ as Lord while grace is still offered to them.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Philippians 2:1-11 and talk about who Christ is, what he did for us, and how that impacts how we live with one another.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 2:12-30. Meditate on verses 12 and 13, and see how that is applied in the life of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 2:1-11 – September 30, 2018

The Model of Christian Unity

What do we learn about God in this passage?

In this passage, we see multiple ways in which God models characteristics that are needed to accomplish Paul's charge at the end of chapter 1: *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*, (Philippians 1:27 ESV). It will be impossible to stand firm in one spirit and strive side by side in unified purpose without understanding these characteristics about God.

- **Christ models the encouragement needed for unity in the church.** Philippians 2:1 is a series of conditional clauses that invites the reader to affirm in sure faith the known positive answer. So, they are to be read, for example, "if there is any encouragement in Christ, (written text) and we can be sure that there is (implied answer)." The first of these is the encouragement that is found in Christ. This encouragement has a dual sense with it—it is both uplifting and exhortative. Christ both lifts our spirits and challenges us to press on, forgetting the past—both the good and the bad—and move forward with eyes fixed on the upward call that is in Christ Jesus. This is the type of encouragement that was clearly modeled in the life of Jesus (see two examples with Peter: John 21 and Matthew 16:21-28) that is needed in the church. If someone is fainthearted, weak, and/or burned-out, a more uplifting approach is needed. If someone is idle, unknowingly straying into sin, or has grown complacent, a firmer admonishment may be in order. When applied, this encouragement will strengthen the church and protect it from unwanted division.
- **The Father models the love needed for unity in the church.** There is some debate among commentators as to whether the Father is the implied source of this, but it seems to me (Hunter) that the strongest arguments put forth and the apparent Trinitarian formula support that the Father is meant to be naturally understood as source of this love (See 2 Cor. 1:3-5, 13:14, Jn. 3:16). This love from the Father is the same love that led him to give "his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16) and that "comforts us in all our afflictions" (2 Cor. 1:4a). This same love and comfort we are called to extend to one another, (2 Cor. 1:4b).
- **The Spirit models the tenderness and fellowship needed for unity in the church.** The last conditional clause highlights the participation of the Spirit, or more literally "fellowship", that is accompanied by affection and tender compassion (or sympathy). Read these two summary statements about who the Holy Spirit is and how he operates in the Trinity and with believers from Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*:
 1. "The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. His work is the expression and execution of what the three of them have planned together. *There is no tension among their persons and activities.*" (italics mine).
 2. "God is not far off. In the Holy Spirit, the Triune God comes close, so close as to actually enter into each believer. He is even more involved with us now than in the incarnation. Through the operation of the Spirit he has truly become Immanuel, 'God with us.'"This type unity, displayed in the fellowship of the Trinity and the intimacy with the believer and the indwelling Spirit, is the type of fellowship and tender compassion that is to be applied in the fellowship of the church.
- **Christ models the humility needed for unity in the church.** Christ displayed wonderful humility throughout the time of his incarnation. The very fact that he left Heaven and took on flesh is a display of his humility. Not only did he take on flesh, he lived a life of perfect humility. He served. He did not

exalt himself. And ultimately, he died a sinner's death in our place, though he was perfectly righteous. He is the supreme example of the Christian humility that is needed for Christian unity.

- **Christ is both God and man, and he is highly exalted as Lord to the glory of the Father.** "Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever" (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*). You will not be able to cover fully the in-depth details of the incarnation of Christ in this one Life Group meeting, nor would it be wise to try. But without the incarnation, there would be no reconciliation. If Christ wasn't man, he could not die in our place. If he wasn't God, he could not have met the requirement of sinlessness. He now lives in an exalted state in his resurrected body as the firstfruits of the resurrection body we will receive in the future resurrection, all for the glory of God the Father. The exaltation of Christ and the hope of the future resurrection humbles us today and binds us together with a common hope.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We must overcome our inclination towards selfish ambition and empty self-glorification.** One does not have to teach a child to say, "mine", or to brag about their accomplishments. These come naturally. Christian unity can only occur when believers understand, "Blessed are the meek."
- **We must overcome our inclination to look after our interests only.** Likewise, our natural tendency is to let the busyness and the "fires" of this life to turn our attention solely to our needs. In the body of Christ this cannot be the case. We must care for each other's needs along with our own, because when one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers as a result.

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *The work and nature of the Father, the Spirit, and the Son, provides the model that we are to diligently follow in order to pursue Christian unity.*

- **Pursue Christian unity through humble attitudes and actions.** We must consider in our minds others to be more significant (attitude) and look to their interests along with our own (actions). Both are required. Unity will not result from a begrudging sacrifice or empty talk. We must love one another in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). *Think all the areas in your life where this needs to be applied.*
- **Pursue Christian unity by looking to Christ.** If we are not looking toward Christ, as he revealed himself in his word, we will never achieve unity. The importance of believers engaging God's word to Christian unity within the church cannot be overstated.
- **Pursue Christian unity with the end in mind.** An eternal perspective that recognizes the exalted Christ and the future life with him helps to not let minor, temporary issues disrupt the unity of the church.

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Serve sacrificially and without grumbling.** Any and all ministry requires sacrifice, and God has called us to serve joyfully and with no grumbling. *Are you participating in sacrificial ministry? If not, why not? If so, are you doing so without grumbling?*
- **Be quick to listen.** Oftentimes, disunity emerges from a failure to listen. People begin just talking over one another, wanting to get their point across, and at the end of the day we are less unified than when the conversation started. We must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger in order to pursue Christian unity.

In which areas does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Vision Series: Grow – October 7th, 2018

Life Groups exist to grow together as disciples of Jesus Christ and engage in making disciples who are well-equipped to love God and love others.

A Good Reminder: The natural path of Life Group, and life in general, does not result in disciple-making. It takes intentionality to grow as a disciple and to make disciples.

Be a disciple.

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus... (2 Timothy 2:1 ESV)

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder (2 Peter 1:3-13 ESV)

Quick Points:

- Discipleship is the result of grace. We need the grace of God just as much for our discipleship as we do for our salvation.
- God has given us everything we need for effective discipleship in his Word which the Spirit uses to work sanctification in us.
- Growing as a disciple requires effort, diligence, and a holistic approach.
- We are never at a point where we have arrived. We are to be ever-increasing in our becoming like Christ.
- We need to be reminded and challenged often about our discipleship.

Is our Life Group pushing one another to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ? What are ways that we can better stir one another up in this way?

Where do you personally need to grow as a disciple?

Relying on Grace	Using God's Word	Engaging in Prayer	Faith
Knowledge of truth	Virtue	Self-Control	Steadfastness
Godliness	Brotherly Affection	Love	Diligence

Now, pray for God's help and wisdom. Rely on his grace, and make every effort! *Do not settle for mediocrity.*

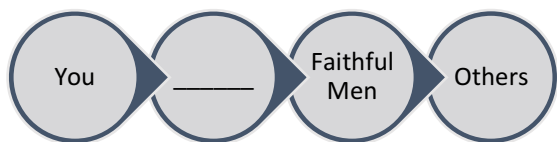
Make disciples.

and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2 ESV)

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

Semi-Quick Points:

- Paul disciplined Timothy before he urged him to make disciples. One must be a disciple before one can make disciples.
- Discipleship is meant to be multiplication. Train up faithful men and women to invest in others.
- We make disciples in the authority of Jesus, knowing that he is with us always.
- It is true that original Greek stresses the verb for "make disciples," but the verb Go is not to be understood in a passive "as you go through life" sense. The structure of the participle "go" and the imperative "make disciples" used in such a way that the imperative force applies to both verbs (This is why every major translation does not translate "go" to be "as you go". Our going is meant to be active.) Making disciples can only happen after the going. It may be that we go next door or across the hall at work or across the Atlantic, regardless one must *go in order to make disciples*.
- We are to make disciples of all nations or peoples. As a church, we cannot discriminate.
- God has defined the means of discipleship – Baptism and Teaching. God has entrusted his church with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to aid in the discipleship process. Baptism by immersion after being born again is supposed to be the first act of obedience by a believer where they proclaim publicly their salvation and connect themselves to a local church body where they are regularly taught the word of God. We also teach one another on an individual or small group level, specifically on how to grow in loving God and loving others in accordance with Jesus' great commandment and the teachings of the Old and New Testament.



Who is in the blank for you?

How can our Life Group better go to our families, into our community and in our world with the purpose of making disciples? (Be Specific)

Families:

Community:

World:

Life Group – Philippians 2:12-30 – October 14, 2018

The Power of God in Your Life

CONNECT

Who is someone you look up to and why?
What qualities do they possess that make you want to model aspects of your life after them?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 2:12-30

(Additional Passages: Acts 9:26-31; 2 Cor. 5:16-20; 1 Thess. 1:4-7, 5:2-11; Num. 28:1-8; Gal. 2:20)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time to praise God for the active role he has in our lives. Pray that he would use your Life Group to make a kingdom impact in our community. Ask the Lord that he would be your strength and boldness to live set apart from the ways of this world.

The Philippians were partners in the gospel with Paul and partakers of the saving grace God gives. Pray for those in your circles who are lost that they would experience this grace that God gives *as a result of your gospel ministry*. Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season*.

For the Family: Read Phil. 2:12-30 together and discuss how God has called us to live differently, but how he has also given us exactly what we need to do it.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 3:1-16. Think about Paul's statement about "whatever gain he had, he counted as loss for the sake of Christ." What did he mean by that? What does that mean in the context of your life?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 2:12-30 – October 14, 2018

The Power of God in Your Life

What do we learn about God in this passage?

- **God enables and sanctifies believers.**

We see in verse 13 that God is the one who works in us to change our desires and our works. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are enabled to fulfill the calling and purpose we have been given by Christ (1 Thess 1:4-5) to glorify God with our lives. It is also the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit”. One of the chief jobs of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, is to grow us into the image of Christ keeping our souls blameless until Jesus returns (1 Thess. 5:23-24). Paul explicitly tells us in his letter to the Thessalonians that the will of God is our sanctification (1 Thess 4:3). Only through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit can we serve others well, show compassion to those who come against us, or live a life set apart from the sin and darkness of this world. So it is because God is actively working within us that we can then “work out our salvation”.

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

If we look back at last week’s lesson at the end of the passage, in verses 5-11, we see the perfect and sufficient sacrifice God made through Jesus which allowed us, who repent and believe, to be brought from death to life (2 Cor 5:16-20). This completely alters the trajectory of our life. We no longer are living for ourselves. When we truly recognize the profound work of Christ, we begin to live our life with the foundational hope that at the end of our time here, Jesus will stand with us as our advocate and we will be ushered into his glory for all of eternity. Because of the promise of Christ, we are enabled by his Spirit to “work out our faith.”

- **Our faith must be active.** We have been given the honor and privilege of joining God in his kingdom ministry. He calls us his “coworker in the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess. 3:2) because our salvation comes not only with a promise of eternal life with him in heaven, but also purpose here on earth that needs to be exercised. We see in Scripture time and time again that faith is always accompanied by works (James 1:22-27, 2:14-23; 1 Jn 4:19-21; 1 Ptr 1:15-16). Let’s not be content with a stagnant or complacent faith, but let’s encourage one another to pursue the ways of God and set Christ as our example for daily living. *List ways that Christ demonstrated love and compassion to others and discuss ways that your Life Group can imitate them in your day-to-day lives.*
- **We cannot be self-reliant in our faith.** On the other hand, it is easy to fall into the lie that we alone are the ones in control of our sanctification or spiritual growth. We get caught up in thinking that we need to muster up the will to clean ourselves up. But, if we could not save ourselves by our own will, how can we expect to be the ones who enable ourselves to grow into the image of Christ? Remember, it is *God* who enables – it is *God* who sanctifies. To be self-reliant on our own determination and will, is to trade the victorious power of the Spirit for worthless efforts that, alone, cannot make a lasting impact or change. *Discuss with your Life Group ways that we work out our reliance on the Lord. (prayer, humbly and daily reading scripture, engaging in the fellowship and ministry of the church, etc.)*
- **Have a posture of humility before the Lord.** As believers, we know that Christ has taken the fullness of our deserved wrath on the cross, so this fear is not a fear of losing our salvation, but a reverence for the power of the Creator God. When we recognize who we are in light of who God is, there is a natural result of “fear and trembling”—just read Revelation! This has to do with living in awe of God, but it also means that we should live “in humility before God and in submission to His will”¹⁰. Proverbs 9:10 says,

¹⁰ Merida, 109.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”. So, when we humble ourselves before God, we will then be able to view relationships, circumstances and trials rightly and maneuver through them with wisdom and grace.

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *God enables us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to live holy lives while serving and loving others.*

- **Rely wholly on the Holy Spirit.** Through humble prayer and *letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly* (Col 3:16), you will begin to deny your fleshly desires and choose the way of the Lord.
- **Do all things in gratitude, without grumbling.** We are called to be holy as God is holy (1 Pt 1:16); therefore, when others around you are complaining or gossiping about your boss, teacher, coworker, teammate, etc. we are called to approach all things with thankfulness. This is not going to be our natural tendency; it's going to feel uncomfortable. Remember, the treasure being stored up for us in heaven will far outweigh the social cost of being holy.
- **Hold fast to the Word of Life.** Live your life unashamed of the truths taught in Scripture. Read it, study it, talk about it, and pray through it. It is more powerful than anything of this world and will not return void. *Talk with your Life Group about the importance of standing firm on Truth, especially in today's political and social climate.*
- **Follow Paul's example – rejoice in all circumstances.** During Old Testament times, the priest would pour wine on burnt offerings, creating a pleasant aroma. Paul is saying that the sacrifices he's made for the Philippians are good and pleasing because of the spiritual growth and faithfulness they are showing to the Lord. Like Paul, make sacrifices for others so that they might know the love of the Father more fully. When we do make sacrifices, we should not make them begrudgingly or out of obligation, but it should be done with a joyful and generous heart.
- **Follow Timothy's example – seek the welfare of others.** We all can tell whether people are being genuine or not. Timothy was one who didn't seek his own interest, but sought to glorify God by loving other people well. *Take time to pause and ask the Lord to deepen your love for others.*
- **Follow Epaphroditus' example – be sold out to the mission.** Remember the promise of eternal life with our Savior. Think about the reward that awaits you when you enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Imagine the joy you will feel when you hear your Father say, “Well done, good and faithful servant”. When we are reminded of these things, we are encouraged to endure the trials that come with living a life worthy of the gospel. Do not let fear and worry keep you from experiencing the joy and satisfaction of being a part of God's Kingdom ministry. Work wholeheartedly unto the Lord.

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Serve wholeheartedly in a specific area of ministry.** Find a ministry of the church in which to serve faithfully and go all out. God has brought you into this church, with specific skills and talents, to build up and edify it.
- **Meet with someone this week who is struggling.** Whether they are physically sick, going through a difficult situation at home, or just stressed with the trials of life, find time this week to meet up with someone face-to-face to encourage them with truth and show them that they are not alone.
- **Consistently be in God's Word so that on Sundays you can come ready to encourage others in your Life Group.** When we're consistently in God's Word, we begin to talk and act differently - from the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. By engaging in God's Word outside of the context of MeadowBrook, we bring a more vibrant and rich outlook when we gather together here each week.

In which areas does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Philippians 3:1-16 – October 21, 2018

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

CONNECT

Have you ever worked hard to buy something only to be disappointed in the end? Do you own something now that you hold very dear?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 3:1-16

(Additional Passages: Heb. 11:26; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Tim. 6:12,19; 1 Cor. 9:24; Exo. 34:13-14)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for the state of your heart. Are there areas of your life where you find that you are unwilling to count them as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ? Pray that you would have a heart that presses on. Pray that you would be willing with all you have to press on toward the goal.

Paul made it clear in this passage that he could easily boast in his earthly accomplishments, but that this was not the way of Christ. Are there areas of your life that you holding as these “spiritual markers”? Pray that God would give you a heart of repentance, so that you do not cling to these, but rather to Him.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be careful not to uplift the blessings in your life about the giver of those blessings. Share with others that Christ, not possessions, is the greatest reward in this life.

For the Family: Read Phil. 3:13-14 and remind your family that even in hard times, there is great joy and purpose in always pressing on toward the greater goal that is found in Christ.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 3:17-4:1. Note how Paul is encouraging the Philippians to be rooted in the truths of Christ, and keep themselves from focusing on earthly things.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 3:1-16 – October 21, 2018

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

What do we learn about God in this passage?

In this passage, we see three specific ideas about God that Paul is pointing out. We must remember that the central message that Paul is speaking is that we must live lives worthy of the Gospel, and we are able to see this in these characteristics of God that we see in this passage.

- **God is intimately involved in our lives.**

We worship, but we do that by the Spirit of God (v.3). We are righteous, but not by any of our own work, but rather through faith in Christ (v.9). We are in Christ because He has made us one of His own (v.12). These passages clearly point to the work that Christ does in our lives. We don't worship, we aren't made right, and we aren't His if He doesn't make us such. This should be an extremely comforting thought—we *get to* rest in his sustaining power.

- **God is about His glory.**

God is ultimately about His glory (Ex. 34:13-14). If he were put anything else over his glory then he would be idolatrous. God being about his glory is actually the best thing for us, because God's commitment to his glory is expressed through his commitment to work things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purposes. And when we too live to make much of him, we experience lasting joy and satisfaction that could not be experienced any other way. We see this same move toward the glory of Christ in Paul when he writes that he is willing to lose everything "For His sake" (v.8). This shows the great reward in pursuit of the glory of Christ with such abandon.

- **God himself is the ultimate prize.**

God isn't seen throughout this passage in a way that is passive or has no end result. Jesus is the ultimate prize and goal. When Jesus defined eternal life in John 17, he said that eternal life is knowing God the Father and the one whom he has sent. That is what eternity is about—God being our God and us being his people in perfect fellowship forever. Paul urges us to press on to this goal, which is the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v.14).

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We are susceptible to attack.**

Paul begins this section of the letter warning of those who mutilate the flesh. This passage is similar to 1 Peter 5:8. Paul is warning believers to look out. None of us are above falling into any sin, especially the legalism mentioned in this in this particular passage, which was a warning against those who were staunch in the law and were not following Christ.

- **We can't place our hope in accomplishments or heritage.**

Paul, above all people, had a right to boast and speak highly of heritage. And he actually spells it out very clearly in this section of scripture. However, he quickly points out that he regards all of that heritage and accomplishment as rubbish in light of knowing Christ. Because at the end when all is said and done, we take nothing with us. Solomon, at the end of his life, looked back on a life that was tragically devoted to earthly pleasures rather than the way God had outlined and he said that everything that he had accomplished was meaningless. All the money, women, and power he had accumulated was meaningless. Paul here reflects on the life he lived before Christ, which heralded his self-righteousness, and he too concludes that it was rubbish and not worth anything. Only in Christ can we find meaning and worth and purpose.

- **Our lives in Christ are an ongoing battle.**

We could easily look at this idea about ourselves and think that somehow we had to work or press on to actually obtain salvation. God began, continues, and will complete our salvation, but we still are called to continue to battle and press on toward the goal of the upward call found in Christ. Spiritual laziness is not an option for the life of the believer. The Spirit empowers and we are responsible to respond in action, as we rest in full assurance of the work God has begun in us and will bring to completion one day. 1 Cor. 9:24-27 provides us a perfect example of this idea of fighting, discipline, and the ultimate goal of what we are pursuing.

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *Being willing to give up everything in this life for Christ isn't loss, but rather is the greatest and sweetest gain.*

There are many things that our culture places worth and value in—money, family, political power, business success, image, pride in personal righteousness, etc. None of it compares to the surpassing worth that is found in Christ and his way of life. Does that mean that we throw all those things aside? No, that would be foolish. Some things may need to be thrown aside, but definitely not all. *Prayerfully consider the following two questions and use them to evaluate honestly the things that you hold dear in your life.*

What is God revealing to you that is competing with Christ that needs to be re-prioritized?

What is God revealing to you that is competing with Christ that needs to be thrown aside?

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Be a Gospel defender.**

God has made us all ministers of the gospel. As members of MeadowBrook, we want to stand for the truth of the gospel at all times. This doesn't have to be done in a hateful or angry way, but always be standing for the gospel in your Life Group, in worship, in trips, and in the overall ministry of MeadowBrook.

- **Be willing to let go of resources (abundance) for the sake of the Gospel at MeadowBrook.**

As Paul wrote that he was willing to count all things loss for the surpassing joy of knowing Christ, may we be willing as members of MeadowBrook to count all that we have loss. Pray and see if there are things/areas of your life that Christ wants you to give up for His sake for the church.

- **Be an encourager by pressing brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook toward Christ.**

This may look different for everyone at MeadowBrook, but make a deliberate effort to engage your brothers and sisters with encouragement. As they strain and press forward, be there to encourage them in that journey. Encouragement may mean more to someone than you could ever know.

In which areas does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Philippians 3:17-4:1 – October 28, 2018

Pressing Toward Our Heavenly Home

CONNECT

Is there a vacation spot (hotel, location), a restaurant, or a song that brings great memories to you, or makes you feel at home? What is it about those things that bring these feelings?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 3:17-4:1

(Additional Passages: 1 Cor. 11:1, 15:43-53; Eph. 1:19, 2:19; 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10; Jas. 1:22-25)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray that by the Holy Spirit, you would follow Jesus as Paul followed Him. Pray that your heart would be bent toward Christ and not leaning toward those people who may come against you.

As a follower of Christ, we are sojourners on this earth. Pray that God would give you an eternal vision.

As we grow in Christ we should stand firm in Him. Pray that we would rest on the solid foundation of Christ.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Phil. 1:6-11 and discuss how God continually works in the lives of believers from salvation, throughout their life, and into eternity.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Philippians 4:2-9 over the next couple weeks and use the passage to evaluate your current thought life.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 3:17-4:1 – October 28, 2018

Pressing Toward Our Heavenly Home

What do we learn about God in this passage?

This passage of scripture covers the full spectrum of God and His attributes and close out with the key idea of living a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. We see the attributes of Christ coming through following Paul's clear confession in the previous section of scripture. These attributes that we see in this section focus more specifically on Christ, while as the ideas that we saw in the previous section of scripture deal more with our response to the gospel.

- **God is the chief example for us to follow.**

Paul is pointing out in verse 17 the desire that he has for the Philippians to follow after the example that he has set before them. The key truth to remember in this is the truth that Christ is the one Paul is imitating. *"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."* (1 Cor. 11:1, ESV). Paul wasn't asking the Philippians to follow him because he was the chief example. Paul wanted the Philippians to follow him as he was following Christ, because Paul knew that Jesus was the chief example.

- **God is patient, even with his enemies.**

God could easily, and fully within his rights, quickly and immediately erase those who oppose Him. Paul is speaking of those individuals here. As he points out, they have chosen their earthly home over the things of God, and their god is their belly. Jesus is clear through the teachings of Paul here that separation from himself and his ways lead to destruction. Following Christ is the only path that is filled with and ends in abundant life. (See John 10:10)

- **God will be faithful to complete his good work.**

Philippians 1:6 points out that God who begins a good work will complete that good work. This attribute of God's personality is seen again here as Paul is teaching that Jesus will transform our earthly bodies completing his work of salvation in us. These four verses are a great transition from the judgment of God to the faithfulness of God to maintain His promises. We are also able to see that God is both a God of judgement/justice and mercy. His faithfulness can be seen in both of these attributes and passages.

Dig Deeper: What are some characteristics of these new heavenly bodies?

- Imperishable— "They will be completely healthy and strong forever... All will be made perfect. Our resurrection bodies will show the fulfilment of God's perfect wisdom in creating us as human beings who are the pinnacle of his creation and the appropriate bearers of his likeness and image. In these resurrection bodies we will clearly see humanity as God intended it to be." – Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*
- Glorious—Our new bodies will be radiant and perfect in beauty.
- Power— "Our resurrected bodies will be given fullness of strength and power that is sufficient to do all that we desire to do in conformity with the will of God." -- Grudem
- Spiritual Body—This does not mean that we do not have a physical body in the resurrection, but rather that our new body is superior in every way and specifically created to exist in the glorified state for all eternity. (Michael Svigel, *Exploring Christian Theology*.)

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We naturally imitate others, so make sure you imitate the right people.**

Paul is encouraging the Philippians to imitate him. He is speaking of the example that had been taught to them. If we are not careful, or at times without it being deliberate we may at times begin to imitate what we see/hear, even from people in pulpits (even if it is not biblically sound). This is why Paul is encouraging us to imitate himself as he imitates Christ.

- **We are vulnerable to drifting.**

Paul points out that there are enemies of the cross who have set their roots here on earth. Paul is pointing out the difference between those rooted on earth and those who set their mind on eternity. The phrase “their god is their belly” speaks to the idea of serving themselves rather than God. If we are not firmly rooted in Christ and the things of eternity, we could easily drift and get comfortable in those earthly things.

- **Being a follower of Christ is an ongoing activity.**

Paul is giving a clear statement to stand firm in the Lord. “Who stands firm? Only the one for whom the final standard is not his reason, his principles, his conscience, his freedom, his virtue, but who is ready to sacrifice all these, when in faith and sole allegiance to God he is called to obedient and responsible action: the responsible person, whose life will be nothing but an answer to God's question and call.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer This quote from Dietrich reinforces this idea that Paul is speaking about in regard to standing firm in Christ.

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *As followers of Christ, we look to our future redemption in Christ, and as a result, stand firm in the present.*

- **Follow the teachings of Scripture fully.**

We follow and obey those truths that we study from scripture, and those which we are led by in Life Group and preaching. Knowledge of God's word not applied is useless. (James 1:22)

- **Be focused on eternity.**

This can be a difficult thing because we live in a visual world (we can physically see the things of this world). But through the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, we set our minds and heart on eternal things. This produces hope, endurance, joy, and obedience in our lives today.

- **Stand firm in Christ.**

We take that posture of standing as we follow Christ. And not only that we want to encourage those that we love to stand firm in Christ as well.

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Live a life that warrants imitation.**

We don't want people to imitate us for our own flattery, but ultimately the glory of Christ. Live a life so that if our brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook imitated us, the kingdom would be better served.

- **Encourage your brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook to be eternally focused.**

This may look different for each of us on a unique individual basis, but let's encourage each other to use our time, money, possessions, and positions with an eternal mindset.

- **Encourage your brothers and sisters at MeadowBrook to worship in light of what God has done for us.**

- **Encourage others to stand firm in Christ.**

As Paul loved the Philippians, we need to love the people of MeadowBrook enough to encourage them to stand firm in Christ. We do this by encouraging the deep personal study of God's word connected with faithful connection to the local church body.

In which areas does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Vision Series: Serve – November 4, 2018

Life Groups exist to serve together in MeadowBrook's global and local mission effort and in the ministries of the church.

Word of Warning: When talking about serving, people tend to elevate whichever ministry they are most passionate about as being biblically most important to the neglect of the others. For example: someone who is passionate about global ministry might devalue the importance of local ministry and vice versa. This is not good, nor is it biblical. God has called his children to serve globally, locally, and within the church. All are important and all are necessary. To completely neglect one ministry goes clearly against the Word of God and is sinful.

God has called us to serve globally.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 ESV)

³*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!* ⁴*For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.* ⁵*For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.* (Psalm 96:3-5 ESV)

Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen. (Acts 28:28 ESV)

Quick Points:

- God has blessed us with salvation and any physical means so that we will bless others. (Guiding principle for each point.)
- From the very beginnings of God's interactions with his people, God had global impact in mind. This is seen throughout the Old Testament in the Law, the Prophets, and the poetic and proverbial writings.
- God's glory is to be the primary driving force behind missions, partnered with compassion. "Missions exist because worship does not."¹¹ The peoples of the world are worshipping worthless idols that are keeping them in bondage. Freedom is found through salvation that produces worshippers in spirit and in truth.
- God has commissioned his church to bring the message of salvation to the world and in his sovereignty, they will listen. Some will reject it, but the Bible says clearly in Revelation (and other passages) that there will be people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who will repent and believe in the gospel before Christ returns.

How can our Life Group better engage in God's global mission? Which of the above opportunities does your Life Group need to engage in? (Note that this does not necessarily mean that you have to get on a plane. *But I (Hunter) would like to see many Life Groups go on mission trips together.*

¹¹ John Piper. *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 01.

God has called us to serve locally.

For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.' (Deuteronomy 15:11 ESV)

Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. (Psalm 96:2 ESV)

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:39 ESV)

Quick Points:

- There will always be a need for us to serve in our community.
- Evangelism and service with that as our goal is to be a part of our daily routine.
- We are explicitly commanded by Christ to love our neighbor. Now he spoke that command in a way that includes all people everywhere, meaning everyone we come in contact with wherever we are is our neighbor. This does not let us off the hook with regards to loving and serving our actual neighbors, those living in close proximity to us. It only expands our ministry.

In what opportunities is God leading your Life Group to serve? Many of our groups may not be able to avail ourselves of the opportunities we have because of work schedules. You may need to get creative and create your own ways to serve locally in way that has a gospel impact. Remember, the gospel must be involved in our serving. It is not enough to simply serve. The gospel is what people truly need.

God has called us to serve in the church.

¹⁰ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* (1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV)

¹² *So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.* (1 Corinthians 14:12 ESV)

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

Quick Points:

- By his grace, the Spirit gifts believers with various gifts for the purpose of serving one another in the power God supplies through his Word and Spirit.
- We are to strive to build up the church. *Strive*. It should be a priority that we devote energy and time towards. Church members are called to contribute to the ministry, not merely be consumers of ministry.
- The primary ministry of Church Leaders is to equip members of the church to do the work of the ministry, not simply to do the ministry for them.

What are your spiritual gifts and how can you use them to build up the church at MeadowBrook?

Life Group – Philippians 4:2-9 –November 11, 2018

Having a Thought-Life Worthy of the Gospel

CONNECT

How would you rank the current quality of your thought life? How different is it from before God saved you? Would you describe yourself as being an anxious person or a person at peace?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 4:2-9

(Additional Passages: Ps. 1:1-2; Matt. 6:25-34; Rom. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 2:16; 1 Pet. 5:6-7; 2 Pet. 3:11-12)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do we apply these truths to our lives in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Pray for the spiritual unity of your Life Group and this church. If needed, repent of any sins that have led to disunity and seek reconciliation with the offended party.

Pray for the things that are making people in your Life Group anxious. Is it family relationships, parenting, work, ministry, etc.? Whatever it is, let your requests be made known to God.

Take time sentence praying aloud as a group praising God for the things that he is doing in your life that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, and excellent or anything worthy of praise.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Phil. 4:6-7 and talk about what kinds of anxieties plague you the most as a family, and how you can pray together for these as the Apostle Paul advised.

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Read Phil. 4:10-23. Think about Paul's contentedness in all circumstances. Do you believe that you have yet attained much of this ability to manage no matter what?

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 4:2-9 – November 11, 2018

Having a Thought-Life Worthy of the Gospel

What do we learn about God in this passage?

In this passage, we see at least two things of God: His provision of peace and His holiness.

- **The God of provision actively cares for us and gives us His divine peace!** Our God does not want us to keep our worries to ourselves but bring them all to Him. How wonderful it is to “[cast] all [our] anxieties on him, because He cares for [us],” (1 Pet. 5:7) resting assured that He is faithful! It is the steadfast promise of Scripture that He will supply His children with all their needs. That includes His peace, and that peace is one that “surpasses all understanding” (v. 7). What a thing to have!
- **The Holy One enables us and commands us to exhibit holiness not merely outwardly, but inwardly.** One of the things Jesus always condemned was the useless practice of outward religion without true inner substance. The person who outwardly keeps a set of rules and resists allowing the Lord into the privacy of the inner realm of their true motivations and attitudes only fools himself. But being indwelt by the Holy Spirit will result in a marked change in the desires, contemplations, judgments and convictions of one’s heart!

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We are to live in unity and harmony.** This matter was already covered in other lessons, namely in Chapters 3 & 4 of Philippians, but we are reminded again here to “agree in the Lord” (v. 2), as hopefully Euodia and Syntyche eventually did under the admonition of the Apostle.
- **We are not to have anxious minds.** These hymn lyrics, apparently inspired by Philippians 4 sometimes come to mind for me: “Oh, what peace we often forfeit; oh, what needless pain we bear - all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” All too many times have we forfeited the peace that we can have from the Lord, by ignoring our direct access to Him through prayer. How are we doing any better than the lost man who may never know the other-worldly peace of the Lord if we choose not to have it?
- **We are to have godly thought lives.** Not that long ago, Pastor Randy explained to us as he preached that our minds do not merely store and process data, but they have a stance or determination. He taught on Romans 12 verse 2 that the term “conformed” is in the *middle voice*, which means it’s something one is doing; and the term “transformed” is in the *passive voice*, which means it’s something being done to one – in this case, by God the Holy Spirit. To quench the Spirit is to impede His transforming work, and we do this whenever we conform ourselves by thinking as the world thinks!

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *Living with a mind littered with impurities and anxieties is not worthy of the gospel; instead, set apart your mind for noble purposes, allowing it to be guarded by the peace of God.*

- **Identify patterns in your life that are not of the Lord.** Believers in Jesus Christ are prone to ways that are not worthy of the gospel. We must be honest with ourselves about how we really think and act, allowing the Lord by His Word to identify ungodliness and deficiency. Here are some things:
 - o **Rejoicing only at times.** As believers in Christ Jesus, we truly have no worthy cause not to rejoice at all times! If inner rejoicing does not characterize your daily life, this indicates you either do not have the Son (1 John 5:12) or you have simply lost perspective on the

immeasurable value of having Him, and all that means. (A helpful recommendation is a thoughtful review of Luke 7:40-50, the Parable of the Two Debtors). And if it is your suffering as a Christian that is troubling you, be reminded again that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). With all that Christ freely gives us in him, the notion of a dissatisfied, gloomy Christian is absurd!

- **Bearing anxieties alone.** Philippians 4:6 contains one of my favorite lists in Scripture – that is, the list of things about which believers ought to be anxious. Ready for the list? Here it goes: *nothing!* BUT the teaching found in these verses is not simply, “don’t worry” or “make your mind up not to be anxious anymore.” Rather, the teaching is “don’t worry, *but pray* and receive the peace of God.” *That* is the Biblical approach to anxiety! Our first thought might be to go to other people for help, but Psalm 146 says “put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation” (v. 3) and goes on to say, “blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (v. 5). So, the Lord is the one to seek in times of anxiety, although He certainly often uses the right appointed person or people as His instruments of help.
- **Allowing an unclean thought life.** If there is anything that cleanses the Christian of impurities, it is the Word, “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Psalm 19:7-11 describes the effects that the Word of God has upon the inner man as well. Search your life for anything that interferes with the objective of cultivating active meditation on things of the impeccable nature described in Philippians 4:8.

- **“Think about these things” (v.8).** What is it that we can dwell upon in our minds that fits the description of “true,” “honorable,” “just,” “pure,” “lovely,” “commendable,” “excellent,” and “worthy of praise” (v. 8)? Undoubtedly, everything of the Lord (that is, His character, His works and His Word), especially the gospel. Everything in this glorious realm is worthy of revisiting over and over. Spend time visualizing and replaying events described in the Word in your mind, focusing on what they reveal about God. But anything that truly measures up to the eight words or terms above belongs in your stream of consciousness, in the secret place of your innermost thoughts. Surely, a thought life such as this will be entirely different from that of even the most sincere, generous and even religious lost person. When the Lord saves you, you’ll find yourself not in a pattern of “rejoicing at wrongdoing,” but instead “rejoicing with the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6)!

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Pursue unity.** The Spirit that dwells within you is the same Spirit that dwells within the believers at MeadowBrook. Make every effort to keep and protect and promote the unity of this church.
- **Avoid gossip and pride.** Gossip and pride destroy unity, perhaps more than any other sins. Humble yourself and avoid gossip like the plague, putting an end to it any time that you hear it.
- **Know each other’s anxieties and pray together.** Pray for sicknesses of family members. That is good and God definitely cares about that and wants us to do that. But focus your prayers on the things in your fellow brothers’ hearts that are causing worry and anxiety. Petition the Lord on your brother’s or sister’s behalf.
- **Praise God together.** Don’t just pray for the needs, but celebrate together the grace that God shows us. Celebrate together all the things that are worthy of praise and give God the glory.

In which area does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Philippians 4:10-23 – November 18th, 2018

Finding Contentment in Christ

CONNECT

Think about times in your life characterized by “thriving”; and on the converse, times made up more of “surviving.” How did being a Christ follower affect how you handled each?

GROW: Highlight and Explain the Text

Read Main Passage: Philippians 4:10-23

(Additional Passages: Lev. 1:9; Neh. 8:10; Ps. 33:18-19, 34:8-10; Prov. 11:28; Jn. 15:1-11; Acts 16:11-40)

- What do we learn about God in this passage?
- What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?
- How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?
- How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook? How does our Life Group need to grow in this?

SERVE: Apply the Text

What are the specific action steps you need to take this week to apply these truths to your life?

How does this text move me to better serve and love others who are created in the image of God?

Who is God calling you to do good to this week for his glory in response to this passage?

PRAY: Respond to the Text

Take time together as a Life Group to give thanks to God for all the things Christ so generously provides for us in Christ. Pray specifically over situations where you are tempted to be discontent. Pray that God would help you to find contentment in Him.

Pray for our church during this season of Harvest Offerings. Pray for God’s abundant provision and pray that the money raised and the subsequent facilities would be used in a way that makes the glory of God known throughout the community and around the world.

MULTIPLY: Share the Text with Others

Be intentional about building relationships with lost people in your circles so that you may begin to pray for their needs and share the gospel with them *and invite them to MeadowBrook this Christmas season.*

For the Family: Read Phil. 4:14-18 and contrast the greed of the world with the Philippians’ generous giving. How does it feel to receive an unexpected provision from fellow believers?

Prepare: Study for Next Week

Think about how God has blessed you and what he has called you to do with those resources. Next week, we will be discussing generosity as it pertains to the vision of Life Groups.

MEMORIZE: Meditate on the Text

¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 3:13-14 ESV)

Life Group – Philippians 4:10-23 – November 18th, 2018

Finding Contentment in Christ

What do we learn about God in this passage?

In this passage, we find three basic actions of God that appear in the Scriptures repeatedly: the Lord transforms; the Lord strengthens; and the Lord provides. He unwaveringly does these things in the lives of those He calls His own!

- **God transforms.** The Lord is mighty to save, for He transformed both Paul and those who received him in Macedonia (although Lydia was already a “worshiper of God” (Acts 16:14)). One of Paul’s closing statements, “greet every saint in Christ Jesus,” (v. 21) represents the complete opposite of his mindset before his dramatic conversion. Here, with perfect sincerity, humility and love he expresses goodwill towards all those who had become his brethren and were no more his targets. The transforming power of the Lord is clearly seen as Paul expresses such sentiments as “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you” (1:3) and “God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus” (1:8). And we see the reciprocal love of the Philippians in providing for Paul’s needs...more than once (4:16)!
- **God strengthens.** We are able to do the work of Christ because we are in communion with Him. John 15:1-11 records Jesus’ teaching on the vine and the branches, one of the figures Jesus used referring to himself and the Church. What Chafer’s Systematic Theology (1988, abridged) summarizes about those verses is this: “the contribution (of the figure) is to emphasize the provision of unbroken communion of the believer with the Lord, the *enabling power of God* resting on him...the vine and the branches partake of *one common life*” (253, emphasis mine). Paul wrote elsewhere that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). For Christ to live in us is to have a strength that unbelievers simply do not have.
- **God provides.** The Scriptures are overflowing with testimonies of the Lord’s provision, so that they are too many to recite. But we read of yet another in Philippians, and Paul testifies of this to the Corinthians: “and when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need” (2 Cor. 11:9). The Lord proves Himself “Yahweh-jireh” (meaning “the LORD will provide”) yet again!

What do we learn about ourselves in this passage?

- **We have great opportunities to give.** Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount, “do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:19-20). The Philippian church, which had both wealthy (Lydia) and poor (slave girl) members, understood the kingdom impact their money could have so they gave.
- **Our motivations for giving should match theirs.** Although they saw a marvelous thing done when Paul and Silas first arrived (read the account of the prison incident in Acts 16), the Philippians were motivated by love and not fandom towards these men as they gave. Neither did they give to be seen by others (Matt. 6:1-4), because the Apostle would have rebuked them for doing so. Instead, he recognized genuineness and made sure to show appreciation!
- **We can do all things through Christ!** Philippians 4:13 is often quoted but greatly runs the risk of being misapplied, especially in our culture which promotes self-serving ambition. Really, in context it means “no matter what conditions I face, I can manage,” rather than “I can accomplish whatever earthly goals

I decide upon if I can get God to help me out.” Of course, remarkable accomplishments can be done by God’s people (Neh. 6:15-16) but goals not part of God’s plans shouldn’t be set (Ps. 127:1-2).

How do you apply these truths to your life in order to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel?

Main Application Point: *Whether we’re on the giving end, the receiving end or both, God may be greatly glorified by the way we give and how we manage (and manage with) what we have.*

- **Give the kind of sacrifices the Lord loves.** Reading Hebrews, we are reminded “do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (13:16). (Also see 1 Pet. 2:5). Is there such thing as a sacrifice that does not please the Lord? Most certainly! Read Isaiah 1:11-15 for a perfect description. So what kind of sacrifice will you give? Pleasing to God or loathsome to Him?
- **We must learn (as Paul did) to be content!** The Lord wants to teach us (as He taught Paul) to be content in all things. One clear reason for this is because our contentment glorifies God. If He so desired, the Lord could have given Paul and his companions one long season of endless provision – but He didn’t. Instead, they more or less alternated between “plenty and hunger, abundance and need” (v. 12). Our contentment in all things reveals that His grace truly is sufficient, and that for the Christian, material riches are not satisfaction but instead every season is wonderful so long as the Lord is present. Additionally, an often-neglected principle is the spiritual *benefit* of having troubles such as needs (2 Cor. 12:10)! So, if you currently have troubles, it does *not* mean you are out of God’s will. The wicked lack a glorious struggle (Ps. 73:3-9, 12), instead going along “following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Christian, accept whatever the Lord gives you (Job 1:21-22, 2:9-10)!
- **We must care for one another!** The Christian life is by no means anything of a solo flight. No, but “we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). The New Testament contains many “one another” commands and warnings (see Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:13, 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16 for examples from just *one* NT book), strongly communicating that we are one, and must operate as such! None of us should ever seek to live out the Christian life without any outside help; after all, Proverbs 18:1 says “whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” But when it comes specifically to caring for one another, I think we ought to strive to be like the Philippians! One day, when the Son of Man comes in His glory and separates the sheep from the goats, they will ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” (Matt. 25:37-39). Don’t be surprised when the King points to Paul and his companions, saying “truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of My brothers, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25:40).

How do we live out these truths in the context of the life and ministry of MeadowBrook?

- **Encourage contentment in Christ in the way we talk with one another.** Oftentimes, in our casual conversations with one another we show that we are truly not content and Christ, and draw others into a state of discontentment as well. Our conversations should not be this way. We should highlight the contentment that we have in Christ.
- **Support the ministry at MeadowBrook and other saints by regularly giving generously.** This happens through the regular giving to the church and through special offerings that occur over the seasons of ministry at MeadowBrook.

In which areas does your Life Group need to grow?

Life Group – Vision Series: Generosity – November 25, 2018

Life Group members should lead the way in generous giving, serving as an example for all church members.

God's generosity towards us moves us to give generously.

⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8 ESV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 ESV)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9 ESV)

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, (Psalm 24:1 ESV)

Quick Points:

- Christ left heaven and gave up his benefits of being God, so that he could give his very life so that we, who were sinners, might be saved by his sacrifice.
- The Father gave his only Son so that we might have eternal life in fellowship with him—the greatest gift one could ever receive.
- Everything we have belongs to God. We are merely stewards of his grace.

How has God revealed his generosity in your life? List out the ways he has displayed his generosity.

God does not care about the dollar amount.

¹ We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ² for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- ⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. ⁶ Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. ⁷ But as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you--see that you excel in this act of grace also. (2 Corinthians 8:1-7 ESV)

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44 ESV)

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7 ESV)

Quick Points:

- Generosity flows from joy, not wealth.
- God does not expect the same amount of money from everyone, but he is calling people to be generous with the means that he has provided them.
- Sometimes generosity moves us to be sacrificial.
- We should earnestly desire to give.
- Giving is an act of grace that we should seek to excel in, not merely get by in.
- The poorest woman ever mentioned in the Bible is who Jesus chose to use as an example of generosity. "You don't have to be rich to be generous. You have to be generous to be generous." – Johnny Hunt
- A grateful heart must motivate our giving, and a grateful heart will result in giving.

Are you excelling in generosity? What are ways that you see that you excel in this act of grace?

What is God leading you to give as this season of Harvest Offering approaches its end?

Go home and evaluate your finances. Pray about it, asking for God's wisdom and discernment. Then write it down and follow through cheerfully. _____

God works through the generosity of his people.

² *"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. ..."* ⁸ *And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.* (Exodus 25:2, 8 ESV)

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. (Philippians 4:17 ESV)

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:45 ESV)

Quick Points:

- God uses generosity to draw his people closer to himself in worship.
- God uses generosity to produce lasting fruit in the lives of others.
- God uses generosity to meet the needs of others.

What are ways in which your Life Group can display generosity throughout the year towards others so that God can:

Increase the scope of his worship?

Produce eternal fruit in the lives of others?

Meet the needs of others?
