

A blurred, blue-tinted photograph of several people in a modern office or public space. The figures are out of focus, appearing as dark silhouettes against a bright, overexposed background. They seem to be engaged in conversation or walking through the space. The overall mood is professional and contemporary.

CITIZENS

— PHILIPPIANS —

Philippians will

CHALLENGE

ENCOURAGE

COMFORT

TEACH

AND

INSPIRE

us how to live as CITIZENS of
Heaven as residents in this world.”

- *Michael Davis*

USING THIS GUIDE:

Group Leader Instructions

In preparation for each study, take a few moments to read through the instructions below.

BEFORE THE GROUP MEETING:

1. Spend some time in prayer before your group.
2. As you prepare for the study, read over the questions and think through how answering them for yourself could help you better walk with God.
3. Then, try developing two to three practical steps that would help members of your group also walk better with God. Avoid the temptation to simply recount information, but thoughtfully arm your group members with something tangible that they can do throughout the week.
4. In the closing moments of your preparation, ask the Lord to move mightily in your home or group setting. Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing, and we are utterly dependent upon Him showing up!

DURING THE GROUP MEETING:

1. Begin with prayer. Ask for the Spirit to be present during the group.
2. Attempt to summarize this week's message, in a few, succinct, thoughts. (See summary below for an example)
3. Assign readers to read various Scripture texts (When applicable).
4. Walk your group through the discussion questions. (Don't feel like you have to cover every question. Some questions will naturally be more relevant to your group than others and will naturally produce more fruitful discussion. Be sensitive to the flow of conversation and either redirect or dwell longer upon a topic when it is necessary).
5. In response to questions, share stories and personal examples of how this has played out in your life. What did you learn? How did it help you walk with God? What fresh stories of God's power, love, mercy, or grace do you now have because you trusted Him?
6. Draw others out to share their own personal stories. What did they learn? What would life look like if they were able to live out this week's truth consistently?
7. End in a time of prayer, thanking God for the truths that He has revealed, and for the people that He has brought to your group.

SERMON SUMMARY

WEEK 1: JESUS BEGINS AND FINISHES WITH US

Series Purpose:

If you are a Christian, which simply means a follower of Jesus, then you are a CITIZEN of Heaven! This is not something you are working towards, but a REALITY of who you already are in Christ. And as CITIZENS of Heaven, we are called to promote the vision and values of Heaven, even while we are residents here on earth. In this series, we want to look at what heavenly our citizenship looks like and how we can begin living that out in the places that God has called us to reside.

This Week's Summary:

In today's sermon, we began with an introduction on the city of Philippi, which was the first European city to hear the Gospel that Paul brought to the Gentiles. Upon arriving, Lydia (a high-end fashion designer) was saved (along with her whole household). After receiving Christ, she opened her home so that Paul could preach the Gospel to others. She also likely allowed her home to be the first meeting place for the church of Philippi.

Shortly after this, while Paul and Silas were preaching in the streets, a slave girl suffering under a demonic spirit was healed by them. Because of this, an uproar began in the city, which ended up landing Paul and Silas both in jail. Miraculously, however, God frees them from their chains, and allows them to minister to a prison guard who also places his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In sum, the first church was comprised of a former clairvoyant, a recovering sundial jailor, and a high-end fashion designer. This teaches us that God has not only begun a good work, but is also faithful to carry that work forward until it is finished!

This reminds us of the story of Kayla that can be found on ESPN E60. In that story, Kayla was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. But instead of giving up Kayla begins running and pushing herself to become the best runner she can be. Often, she is running with no feeling in her legs and depending upon the shouts from her coach on the sidelines. As she runs harder, the symptoms become so severe that her coach has to literally catch her from falling at the end of the race. In the same way, we serve a God who does not just begin the work and leaves us to figure it out, but a God who is coaching us on the sideline and ready to receive us into His arms when we finish the race. As Christians we are completely reliant upon Jesus, who has not only ran the race before us, but has finished and is ready to support us along the way.

All we need to do is trust and believe that Jesus is there to catch us! All we need to do is call out Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!

QUOTES TO CONSIDER:

"I'm scared of falling and failing in front of all of my foes. And I feel some friends are unfaithful, so I keep my small circle closed. I don't want no handouts or favors, no functional saviors. I'm going to tell that Truth 'til it kill me and I'm chilling with my Creator. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! to all of my haters, for the ones that think I forgot Him and the ones who won't let me say Him. I ain't scared no more." - **Lecrae**

"And I also rejoice because the firm root of your faith, famous from the earliest times, still abides and bears fruit for our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured for our sins even to face death." – **Polycarp**

VERSES FOR REFLECTION:

Philippians 1:3-11: “3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, 5 for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. **6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.**7 So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. 8 God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus.9 I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. 10 For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return. 11 May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the introduction Michael showed us that the Philippian church was started with a high-end fashion designer, a medium, and a suicidal prison warden. What do you think this assortment of people teach us about the Church? What does it teach us about God'? What does it teach us about our mission in this world?
2. Paul wrote one of the most joyful letters in all of the New Testament while he was still in prison. How do you think Paul was so joyful as he was writing to the Philippians?
3. The reminder from Scripture this week is that Jesus not only began the good work of salvation in us, but will also carry that work on until it is complete. With that, how is Jesus working this salvation deeper into you today? How is the Holy Spirit growing you to look more like Jesus? How is He teaching you to surrender more of yourself to Him?
4. If our life is a race, then how are we running it? Are we giving everything we have to it? Or are we holding back?

POSSIBLE PRAYER TOPICS:

- Prayers of thanks to Jesus, who has begun a work in us and is working towards completing that work in us.
- Prayers for joy - like Paul - even in the midst of hard circumstances.
- Prayers for patience, since growth happens slower than we would often like.
- Prayers for group participants and any other prayer requests that were shared

CITIZENS

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All Scripture quotations from the NLT
Tyndale House Publishers,
Carol Stream, IL, 2013.