

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 10: I WILL PRESS ON**

#### **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 looked at how the apostle Paul looked back at his life. A life that was once riddled with sins, such as imprisoning and persecuting Christians all the way up to condoning and signing off on their murder. If there was ever a guy who should have regrets from their sins it was this man. And, like Paul, we have sins that haunt us from the past; sins that keep us from moving forward; sins that mire us in deep sorrow and regret. We may even feel like we are too far gone for God to use us. But, like Paul, our past sins do not have to shape who we are or who we will become.

This is not to say it will be easy. Paul tells us that he struggles. He admits to everyone who would ever read this book that he has not arrived. He still has to forget the past by taking his focus off the things behind him in order to press forward toward the things that are in front of him. Paul tell us that he can forget those things even if other people are not going to let him forget. He presses on, not because his past sins are so small, but because what Jesus Christ has done for him was so great! Paul can press on because Jesus had already pressed on for him. When things were the utterly impossible, Jesus pressed forward and won our salvation!

Today, we do not have to act like we have arrived. We do not have to put on a false face. We can humbly admit that we need help that only Jesus can give to us. We can rest in the one who has pressed forward and has won our salvation! We can revel in the fact that God does not view us through the lens of our past sins but sees us through what Jesus has already done!

That means that we can begin viewing ourselves that way as well. We can forget the past and look forward to what lies ahead. We can live free from our past as transformed citizens of heaven! **WE CAN PRESS ON!**

## QUOTES TO CONSIDER:

“There is a beautiful transparency to honest disciples who never wear a false face. While they do not excuse their sin, they do not pretend to be anything but what they are: sinners saved by grace.” - **Brendan Manning**

“As gospel Christians, we should not be afraid of striving, fighting, and working. Some Christians are stalled out in their sanctification for simple lack of effort. They need to know about the Spirit’s power. They need to be rooted in gospel grace. They need to believe in the promises of God. And they need to fight, strive, and make every effort to work out all that God is working in them.” – *Kevin DeYoung*

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full into His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.” – *Helen Howarth Lemmel*

“In the Christian life, it’s not how you start that matters. It’s how you finish. The Christian life isn’t a hundred-yard dash. It’s a marathon. Just because you’ve fallen down doesn’t mean that you can’t get up and finish strong.” – *Steve Farrar*

## **VERSES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Acts 7:57, 58; 8:1:** “They rushed at him and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.”

**Philippians 3:12-14:** “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

**Philippians 3:13, 14:** “But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

**Romans 8:1:** “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

**2 Samuel 22:22-24:** “For I have kept the ways of the Lord; I have not turned from my God to follow evil. I have followed all his regulations; I have never abandoned his decrees. I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin..”

**Philippians 3:20-21:** “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. When you look at your past what are some of the emotions that you feel? Are these good emotions or things like regret, pain, and sorrow?
2. How is your past shaping who you are becoming today? Do you think that your past is rightly or wrongly shaping you?
3. Michael used an example of a mighty elephant that is tied to a post in the ground in order to show how we often live. Do you feel like this was true for you? What are some of the posts that you have been tied to?
4. There are two basic ways to approach our past. First, we can look back believing we can sort it all out and that we are in control. The second, is to look back knowing that we cannot sort it all out and that we are absolutely dependent on Jesus to help us with the mess. Which way are you approaching your past?
5. When you begin walking forward in new freedom, the people around you remember the way you used to be. How does their opinions of you make you feel? How is it hard to press forward when you are reminded of your past?
6. Why is it so hard to live like we are free?
7. How does being a citizen of heaven help us press forward? How does this give us hope while living as residents of this earth?

## **POSSIBLE PRAYER TOPICS:**

- Prayers of thankfulness that God redeemed our past
- Prayers that we would forget our pasts and begin pressing forward into the journey that God has for us
- Prayers that we would live consistent with our heavenly citizenship and that God would use us to show others about how good He is
- Prayers for group participants and any prayer requests that were shared

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