

A blurred, blue-toned 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 11: THE LORD IS NEAR

#### 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 a recap of the Philippians, which centers around one message: *believers ought to live as citizens of heaven while living as residents of this earth.* That is the consistent theme that pops up again and again throughout the book. Whether that is the promise that God is still working in us to make us better citizens (**Phil. 1:6**), the command that we should be living as worthy citizens (**Phil. 1:27**), or the ultimate example of how to be a citizen, which is to be like Jesus Christ (**Phil. 2:5-11**), Paul continually reinforces that point because it is the single most important thing he wanted to get across.

And today, as we near the end of our journey through Philippians, we will look at the practical ways that we can begin living this way. Paul has taken three chapters to tell us **WHO** we should be. Now, in the final chapter, he is going to focus on **HOW** we should do it.

For Paul, being a citizen of heaven means rejoicing even in the hardest trials. It means being gentle to everyone, even to the ones who are hurting you. It means laying down your anxieties, even in impossible circumstances. It means praying with thanksgiving in every situation that this life gives you and presenting your requests to God. Being a citizen of heaven means experiencing the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding and leads you to think godly thoughts. Being a citizen of heaven ensures that your character will be growing and that you will be able to put wise teaching into practice.

But, ultimately, being a citizen of heaven is knowing that the Lord is near! For instance, knowing that the Lord is near is the only way we can rejoice, it is the only way we can be gentle, it is the only way we can lay down our anxieties and pray with thanksgiving, and it is the only way we will ever get to experience the peace of God. Knowing that the Lord is near is the reason our thinking and our actions are changing to look more like Jesus. In fact, knowing that the Lord is near is the single most important fact that each of us can know! It is the proof that He is not distant and the declaration that He will never leave us or forsake us! The Lord is not distant to His children. **HE IS NEAR!**

## **QUOTES TO CONSIDER:**

## VERSES FOR REFLECTION:

**Philippians 1:6** “he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**Philippians 1:21:** “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

**Philippians 1:27:** “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”

**Philippians 2:5-11:** “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.”

**Philippians 4:2, 3:** “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

**Philippians 3:20-21:** “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Our citizenship in heaven guarantees we no longer have to think, walk, talk or act like citizens of this earth. How has this truth changed your thinking, your walk with God, the ways you talk, or some of the actions you are doing or not doing?
2. Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul is calling us to pattern our lives after Christ. How are you learning to pattern your life after Jesus? What are some of the ways you struggle to live like Christ? What are some stories of success or failure.
3. The background for our verses this week (Phil. 4:2-9) are some major struggles that were causing problems in the Philippian church. What are some of the things you are going through that are causing problems in your walk with God? How is this affecting your walk with others?
4. The most powerful point that Paul gives to us is that the Lord is near. Are you experiencing the nearness of the Lord? Why or why not?
5. How has the Lord's nearness helped you rejoice? How has it helped you be gentle? How has it helped your anxieties or fears?
6. Can you share a story about a time when you experienced the peace of God?
7. If the Lord is near you and you have His peace, what will that do to your thinking and character? Have you ever experienced this? What did it look like?

## **POSSIBLE PRAYER TOPICS:**

- Prayers of thankfulness that the Lord is near! He is not distant!
- Prayers that we would dwell on and experience the nearness of the Lord
- Prayers that we would draw so close to Jesus that the world around us would only see Him
- Prayers for group participants and any prayer requests that were shared

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