

Growing and Going: A Look at the Heart of God

Leader's Guide

A Six-week Small Group Bible Study

by Claire Partlow

From the Missional Bible Studies series of the Center for U.S. Missions

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Growing and Going Leader's Guidelines

Purpose

This adult small group will offer an opportunity to establish a Biblical basis for corporately growing in our faith and for thinking through our values, our vision, and our mission as we begin to reach out to others who do not currently belong to a Christian church.

Growing and Going Goals

1. To offer an opportunity for members and friends of our congregation to gather in a setting of warm hospitality, genuine concern for one another, and open hearts and minds
2. To offer an opportunity for the character of God and the good news of the Gospel to be seen in light of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi
3. To offer time set aside specifically for adults to share in learning, fellowship, and prayer as we allow God to work in our midst
4. To "let the Gospel predominate" in everything we do and say in these sessions. Our purpose is not to preach at people about how they ought to be living or what they ought to be doing to "be better Christians." Our purpose is, rather, to get to know God and how good He is. His Holy Spirit can do the rest. ("Let the Gospel predominate" is the consistent call of Dr. Michael Middendorf, Trembath Chair, Department of Theology at Concordia University, Irvine, California, to his students of Biblical Exegesis.)

Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Colossians 2:7 NLT

(Leader's Guidelines, continued)

6 week Schedule

Week One	A Work Begun	Philippians 1:1-11
Week Two	Chained or Unchained?	Philippians 1:12-30
Week Three	Completed Joy	Philippians 2:1-11
Week Four	Shining Like Stars	Philippians 2:12-18
Week Five	Extra-terrestrial Living	Philippians 3:12-21
Week Six	Actually Going	Philippians 4:1-9

Format

INTRO - sharing what's inside: 5-10 minutes of small group personal sharing for the purpose of getting to know one another.

RETRO - discovering from the past: 45-60 minutes of looking back to Paul's letter to Philippi in order to glean insights for our local church's vision and mission today. Encourage group members to bring their own Bibles and to share insights gleaned from the alternative version's wording.

THEO - turning to God in song (if appropriate) and prayer. These may be the most important 10 minutes of our time together. Send people into small groups (3-4 people each) in different corners of the room (or house) for prayer. Encourage them to pray specifically for one another, for our congregation's mission in our own neighborhood, and for friends and neighbors, by name, who do not attend a church. Also encourage your group to pray that God will work His character—the things discussed that night—in the people gathered together for this study. Then, if appropriate, gather together for a closing song. Hymn and song suggestions are included at the end of this Leader's Guide.

Participants will not be expected to do homework, although there will be a suggested item for meditation during the week (**ACTION ITEM**). Therefore, there is no formal study guide for participants, but rather weekly hand-outs with all Scriptural references noted, as well as quotations from other authors to stimulate thinking and additional reading.

The Leader's Guide provides

- background information on the book of Philippians for week 1
- insights into the theme/purpose of each week's discussion with additional insights for leaders in *smaller italics font*
- a bibliography of works cited, which serve as additional resources
- an alternative version of some Scripture portions from Eugene Peterson's *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*

Please note that while *The Message* is clearly not a translation but a paraphrase, such a Bible version can help us "eliminate as much of the historical distance as possible" (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*) and encourage group members to hear with new ears the words of Paul that may be very familiar to them.

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(Leader's Guidelines, continued)

Philosophy

Growing and Going is not intended to be a Bible Study on the book of Philippians. You need not feel that you must "teach" this book.

We *will* read through the book and discuss it together, but we are not trying to become experts on Paul's theology in the book. Instead, we are using this short book of the New Testament as a means **"for the character of God and the good news of the Gospel"** (goal #2 above) **to infuse our time together.** The more we learn to talk about Him with each other, the easier it will become to talk about Him with others. While leaders should, of course, read and think through any background information provided, you only need share such info if it seems appropriate to group discussion. Let's let the Holy Spirit guide us through His Word.

Your role, as facilitator, is to draw out discussion. The evening should have the feel of warm camaraderie, with lively discussion—not a monologue—as the format. It is your job as discussion facilitator to ensure that every group member has opportunity to talk, so keep your eyes roaming around to see who may have given body language cues that he/she has something to say. You should not feel that you must "fill in" if answers to discussion questions don't come quickly. Be willing to allow for silence, allowing time for thought and for quieter members to jump in.

As a leader, each week you should

- personally pray for each person in your group to grow in his/her faith;
- pray also that God will reveal Himself through His Word. As we begin to see Him at work in our midst, the more excited we will be to share Him with folks outside our congregation's borders;
- read and think through the Scripture and the questions for each week;
- be prepared to share your answer to the INTRO questions *first* each week, if necessary;
- ensure that all group members know where and when the next group meeting will be. You might want to encourage people to volunteer to host or, at least, to share in the goodie-providing;
- come prepared with appropriate handouts, including weekly Participants' Guides and *The Message* reading. Encourage group members to bring their own Bibles, but be prepared with enough Bibles for all.

Leader's Background Information on the Book of Philippians

Author - Paul

Date - Written while Paul was imprisoned. Most assume it was during his two years in Rome, c. 59-61; others argue for c. 53-55 from Ephesus or for 57-59 from Caesarea. Internal evidence (1:13-14; 4:22) and Acts 28:14-31 suggest the latest date from Rome. Apparently (1:7, 25; 2:24), Paul's trial is in progress and he is hoping for release. According to Tertullian (c. 200 AD) and Origen (c. 220 AD), Paul was beheaded under Nero.

"We do not know the precise charge; probably now, as at Thessalonica, Paul was accused of 'disobeying the emperor's decrees, and claiming that someone else called Jesus is king.' This was a crime of *maiestas*, punishable with death. We have no ancient record of the trial . . . Probably, as a Roman citizen, he

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had the honor of a distinct execution, and was not mingled with the Christians crucified after the fire of 64. Tradition united him with Peter in a simultaneous, though separate, martyrdom; and a touching legend pictured the great rivals meeting in friendship on the road to death." (Durant, 591; see also Sienkiewicz and Maier.)

Paul's imprisonment in Rome was a house arrest, in which he was free to receive visitors, write letters, even have aides with him (Epaphroditus and Timothy), but was always attended by a soldier to guard him.

Philippi - (See also Acts 16:11-15; 20:6; and I Thessalonians 2:2.) "A leading city of Macedonia" (*RD Atlas*, 234), it was the site of Octavian and Marc Antony's defeat of Brutus and Cassius in 42 BC. A "prosperous Roman colony" (*NIV Study Notes*, 1801) named after Alexander the Great's father, it was a typical Roman outpost of ex-soldiers "settled at a strategic point in the system of Roman roads for the security of the empire" (Roehrs and Franzmann, 192). Such an outpost was, thus, imbued with Roman values including Roman dress, Latin language, and law. "Nowhere was there greater pride in Roman citizenship than in these outposts of Rome" (Barclay, 122).

The Church in Philippi - Philippi became the first European Christian outpost due to Paul and Timothy's efforts there on Paul's second and third missionary journeys. Paul had wanted to revisit all of the outposts from the first journey (Acts 15:36); when he and Barnabas disagreed over taking Barnabas' young cousin, Paul and Barnabas parted ways. (The young man, John Mark, had deserted their cause earlier in Pamphylia, but we know him today as the author of the gospel of Mark.) Though Paul and Barnabas never worked together again, Paul apparently did not long hold a grudge (I Co 9:6; Gal 2:11-13). Mark continued also to work faithfully (I Pe 5:13; Col 4:10; Phm 24) and was the one Paul requested to come to his side at the end of his life (2 Ti 4:11). Jews lived in Philippi, but without a synagogue. Thus, when Paul sought out Jews on the Sabbath, he sought a typical place of prayer, the riverside (Acts 16:11-15). This new church was predominantly Gentile, but was one of the most supportive of Paul's work (1:5; 4:15-16; 2 Co 8:1-5; 11:8-9). Luke remained at Philippi after Paul left for further missionary work.

Purpose - To encourage the church, make an appeal for unity, and argue against Judaizers

Theological themes - "a typical use of his profound theology for pastoral purposes" (*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology [NDBT]*, 319)

1. **To know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings (3:10).** "For Paul, Christian experience is not to be understood simply in terms of belief in a set of doctrines or as a way of life, although these are integral parts of it; it is also a spiritual experience of a relationship with God through Christ. One of the major contributions of Philippians to biblical theology is the stress laid on this relationship." (*NDBT*, 320)
2. **Joy** - Philippians is often called the "Epistle of Joy" because the word joy (or variant) occurs 16 times in the brief letter.
3. **Humility of Christ** - Paul emphasized that even though Jesus is truly God, His stature as fully divine was far less important to Him than His mission to come as a servant. (2:1-12)

The above concepts may be introduced—or not—in any way you deem fit for your group, remembering that low-key and conversational is the atmosphere we want to establish.

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Guide to Participants' Handout Week One - A Work Begun - Philippians 1:1-11

INTRO - getting to know one another ***This is the week to allow the most time for INTRO.***

1) Break into groups of 4-5 and tell us who most influenced your beliefs when you were a child.

2) (if time permits) Going around again, tell us about the person most influential in your faith journey as an adult.

These questions intentionally leave out "Christian" when mentioning beliefs and faith; we may have a group member who is not a Christian. All people have a belief system around which they organize their lives; let's admit that without compromising the Gospel.

RETRO - discovering from the past

Be prepared to share historical background information as appropriate to the sections read.

Read Acts 16:1-15. Look at maps of Paul's journeys.

What indications do you see of Paul's obvious strategic outlook to his missionary journeying?

See maps of Paul's missionary journeys, available in most good study Bibles or other Bible reference books. Note the widening circles of Paul's routes and the return trips to re-visit previous missions.

How does Barclay's theory (at right) fit with what you know about the Apostle Paul?

Although there will not be enough group time to read the account, be prepared to tell the story of Paul and Silas in prison, Acts 16.

What do we learn about Paul's attitude towards adversity?

Read Philippians 1:1-11

For what and for whom is Paul thankful?

Of what is he confident?

How does His confidence align with or differ from yours?

For what does He pray?

That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans.

Acts 16:9-10 THE MESSAGE

Only a theory: "Who was this man Paul saw in a vision? ... But there is a most attractive theory. There was one man who had succeeded in conquering the world. That was Alexander the Great. . . . The district was permeated with memories of Alexander; and Alexander was the man who had said that his aim was 'to marry the east to the west' and so make one world. It may well be that there came to Paul the vision of Alexander, the man who had conquered the world, and that this vision gave Paul a new impulse towards making one world for Christ." (Barclay, 122)

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Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 1, continued

Compare this Philippians prayer with the one for believers in Ephesians 1:17-23.
What makes Paul so confident?

Reflect on Paul's situation and this introductory section of his letter to these old friends.
Any insights into Paul's personality?

Or into his theology?

Or into his thoughts regarding the future?

Remember to "let the Gospel predominate!" We don't want to turn this into a "how-to" morality lesson on being joyful. While Paul's personality may have predisposed him to confidence, it is God's working within him and around him that gives Paul such assurance.

How does this idea of "the work begun" (Phil. 1: 6) fit into the story of our congregation . . . or your own life?

What does this tell us about the character of God—*who* He is and *what* He is like?

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

ACTION ITEM - Read Psalm 16 and reflect on both the "saints" God has placed in your life and the "places" to which He has sent you

Next Week - "Chained or Unchained?" - Philippians 1:12-30

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Guide to Participants' Handout Week Two - Chained or Unchained? - Philippians 1:12-30

Above all this week, let the Gospel predominate! Our confidence does not come from within ourselves, but only from God, who loves us beyond measure and who came to rescue us from ourselves. It is His death for us and His life in us that brings the kind of confidence Paul displays. It is His good news that will never be contained.

INTRO - getting to know one another

Share with the group about a time when you felt discomfort being a Christian.

RETRO - discovering from the past

Read Philippians 1:12-30 in many versions, including the portions from *The Message*.

Philippians 1:12-14

How would you evaluate Paul's situation?

Paul doesn't tell us that we can be happy, or how to be happy. He simply and unmistakably *is* happy.... Circumstances are incidental compared to the life of Jesus, the Messiah, that Paul experiences from the inside.... Christ is, among much else, the revelation that God cannot be contained or hoarded. (Peterson, 2135)

How do his "chains" fit in to the story? (vv. 7, 14)

See verses 15-18.

Paul seems to have a cavalier attitude toward his rivals. What do you think of his lack of concern?

To face the truth that all our efforts to build security are illusions could lead us to brutal despair if we do not also study the character of God to see how he promises to be our security. (Dawn, 31)

See verses 19-26.

What is Paul's standard for deciding what is *good* and *bad* in life?

Recall that Paul had once persecuted the church—see his own defense of himself in Acts 22. What Paul has done or not done is of no consequence as far as God is concerned; bottom line—he's a sinner! The important message is who God is and what He has done. (See sidebars.)

What does God owe Paul? Or me . . . or you?

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. (2 Corinthians 4:8-11 NIV)

If we're facing a tough situation, danger, or struggle, what would Paul counsel us to pray for?

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Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 2, continued

See verses 27- 30. What part does suffering play in a Christian life?

Read: James 1:2-4

2 Thessalonians 1:3-5

1 Peter 4:14-16

Acts 5:41-42

Matthew 5:11-12

Why don't we need to fear suffering or insult?

How does God's character—*who* He really is and *what* He's really like—help us in such situations?

To what current struggles—either in our congregation-at-large or in your own personal life—might these insights be useful?

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

ACTION ITEM - Read Ephesians 6:1-20. Think about Paul's situation (in prison while writing both Ephesians and Philippians) and think about these verses in light of our discussion tonight.

Next Week - "Completed Joy" - Philippians 2:1-11

Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Colossians 2:7 *NLT*

Guide to Participants' Handout Week Three - Completed Joy - Philippians 2:1-11

This week brings up the issue of comfort zones—that place where we usually like to reside. We will see that astonishingly, Paul found joy in any situation, even imprisonment, because He was able to place his circumstance into the broader perspective of the kingdom. Of utmost importance in this lesson is to see that we—both as individual bearers of the Gospel and also a church—may very well be called to go to places and people we deem undesirable. This is the message of the Incarnation! Jesus left heaven's throne room to come to earth; and He came "while we were yet sinners." (Romans 5:8).

INTRO - getting to know one another

What mantra, creed, or rule did you have to live by growing up?

(examples: "It's your dog; you feed it!" "Don't leave an empty tank.")

In this study, we will see that Paul's motivation comes from his identity in Christ. In growing up, motivators often come from family identity instilled as parental "shoulds" and "oughts." To discuss these before we look at Paul may be a helpful to our understanding of Philippians 2.

How were these mantras instrumental in shaping who you are today?

RETRO - discovering from the past

Read Philippians 2:5-11 in *The Message*. Any comments?

Read Philippians 2:1-2.

What "encouragement" do you get from being united with Christ?

What "comfort" from His love?

How do you sense "fellowship with the Spirit?"

How has God's "tenderness and compassion" played out in your life?

How does *who He is* and *what He's like* affect how you can view your life?

Why does Paul seem to view these as pivotal to his joy being made "complete?"

If you were playing *Pictionary*, what would you draw to convey the ideas gleaned from these two verses?

You'll be surprised at the insight we'll all gain by "hearing" one another's pictures!

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Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 3, continued

Read Philippians 2:3-4.

Next Paul starts writing about motivators.

What motivates you personally? What motivates us as a congregation?

Encourage an honest assessment. Ask if the budget and the calendar affirm the motivators listed. That's the real test of our values.

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

Just what is it that Christ has done?

Who is He really?

What did He leave behind?

To go be *what*?

Read Isaiah 45:23.

Note its context within several declarations of "I am the Lord" especially in Isaiah 42:8 and 44:24-28.

Jesus is this God! He left all glory behind in His Incarnation. What would "incarnation" ministry mean if we were to try it?

How can we know if we are following this model?

Whom might we be trying to reach?

These are questions that need to be addressed in any congregation that is thinking anew about its values, vision, and mission.

Read I Corinthians 6:9-11.

To whom had the church been reaching out in Corinth?

This passage reminds us that while Paul was writing to Christians, they themselves had once been quite undesirable characters!

What might make *us* uncomfortable in our ministry to this neighborhood or city where God has placed our congregation?

How do we know if we're here "by divine appointment?" (see sidebar)

If you have time, use the optional handout from Lark News, an online publication which satirizes to the nth degree. Ask questions like: Could any of us be accused of such a mentality? Could our church? What is the Church called to proclaim in society—morality or the gospel, both/and? How do we draw the line? Are there lines into society beyond which we should not venture?

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

ACTION ITEM - Read Psalm 103. How has "he does not treat us as our sins deserve" (v. 10) been played out in your life?

Next Week - Shining Like Stars

Quite remarkably, you never read where Paul said to his Roman guard, 'I need you to do me a favor. Next time you happen to be near one of the Emperor's assistants, urge him to get me out of this dump' . . . Paul's attitude of unselfish humility prevented him from keeping meticulous records of the wrongs done to him in Rome . . . He asked no favors. He held no grudges. He had no expectations. He was there by divine appointment. He willingly submitted to his situation.

(Swindoll, 309)

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Week Three: Optional Handout

From Lark News: March 1, 2004. Disclaimer: LarkNews® is a satirical newspaper

In Face of Declining U.S. Morality, Christians Emigrate to Muslim Countries

QATAR — In a small but significant trend, Christian employees of corporations and universities are volunteering to work in far-flung countries with strong Muslim majorities. Their goal: To enjoy the comparatively clean moral environment those countries offer.

"We pretty much lost the culture war in America," says Angelina Hayes, mother of three and recent immigrant to Qatar. Her husband was offered a job here by his company, Honeywell. "There is no culture war in Qatar. It's morally safe."

For some evangelical Christians, the recent string of pro-gay court rulings and increasingly permissive pop culture have served as a shot across the bow that has sent them packing to countries whose values more closely match their own.

"You can see where the U.S. is going — toward gay marriage and government-sponsored abortion," said Bruce Darling of IBM who volunteered to move his family to IBM's middle east operations base in Kuwait. "I don't want to be around for that."

Kuwait, Qatar and a few other Arab countries have worked hard to capture a western flavor. There are fast food outlets, malls and even branches of American universities. But their political culture is so conservative that leaders won't even say the words "homosexual" or "abortion" for fear of popular backlash.

In Qatar, on the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula, a lively American suburb has sprung up, populated by more than 860 expatriate families. Most work for U.S. companies, universities or the U.S. military. A few writers and graphic designers do freelance work using e-mail to keep in touch with clients who don't know they reside half-way around the world. The neighborhood they live in looks eerily like any suburb you'd find in the U.S., with wide streets, basketball hoops in the driveway and Mediterranean-style homes.

Gathering in the cul-de-sac one evening as the sun sets red over the nearby desert, the residents say their experience is everything they wanted and more.

"It's a great family atmosphere," says one man.

"Except for the sandstorms," says another man. The others laugh.

"Taxes are low here, so that's a plus," offers one mother whose children ride bikes up and down the street. But the morality question is the main reason these and other Americans relocated to the Middle East.

"We feel a kinship with our Muslim neighbors," says the mother. "There's an innocence. Yes, we disagree on spiritual things, but there's no blatant sexuality on TV, no condoning perverse behavior. This is like America in the 1950s, and that's the environment we want to raise our children in."

Some say they've occasionally been harassed by ardent Muslims, but as one man put it, "I'd rather be razzed by Muslims once a year than forced to share the mainstream culture with godless sickos."

"Amen," says another. A lively discussion about election-year politics ensues (most here will vote absentee for President Bush), and as night falls and the temperature drops, they head indoors for dinner around their family tables, passing plates of pot roast, mashed potatoes and other American staples.

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Guide to Participants' Handout Week Four - Shining Like Stars - Philippians 2:12-18

INTRO - getting to know one another

What has it been like for you to be in this small group? Any thoughts? Feelings? Comments?

This is a good time to find out what the group members think about this small group experience. Allow enough time for everyone to share. In addition, if appropriate in your congregation, this is a good time to bring up the idea of forming new "Growing and Going" (or other) small groups.

RETRO - discovering from the past

Read Philippians 2:12-18 in *The Message*.

Any first impressions of this passage?

How does the context of 2:1-11 (read last week) inform our reading of these next verses in 12-18?

Discuss how everything we do flows out of WHO God is, as revealed by Jesus' Incarnation.

Read Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV). If we're "saved by grace," what part could "work out your salvation" play? Isn't this a gross contradiction?

Many people, both those considering Christianity, as well as some who've known the Lord for many years, wrestle with this seeming contradiction. Is it possible to treat these as both/and rather than either/or?

Now read Ephesians 2:4-10. How can we justify this with the Philippians verses above?

The *NIV Study Bible* footnote says that salvation "expresses itself in an ongoing process in which the believer is strenuously involved." What does that mean in your own walk of faith?

How do we "work out" our salvation—both as individuals and *corporately* as the Body of Christ?

Read Philippians 2:14-18 (NIV).

Paul seems to divide the world into two categories here—the children of God (us) and the rest of the world (them). List his descriptors of each group.

What does he say the "stars" will be doing?

How do we "hold out the word of life" both individually and corporately?

What if all this is not [about] new and more stringent rules for us to observe but rather a picture of the way God is? Of course, we are forever getting confused into thinking that scripture is mainly about what we are supposed to do rather than a picture of who God is.

(Resident Aliens, 87)

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Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 4, continued

VIDEO CLIP – Sister Act

(Clips of Whoopie being chosen as new choir director; scene of new choir singing; teens walking in off street; Bishop speaking with Reverend Mother in her office and resultant street scenes. Approximately 9-10 minutes.)

Note: It is illegal to show a clip from a movie in a public gathering without licensing. [Christian Video Licensing International](http://www.cvli.org/cvli/index.cfm) at <http://www.cvli.org/cvli/index.cfm>, a partner firm with CCLI, the worship song licensing company familiar to many churches, provides such licensing.

How would you describe what took place in that convent?
In that church? In the community?

This is the most important question in this week's discussion. Allow group members time to skim back over what we've been studying. Remember our first goal: This adult small group will offer an opportunity to establish a Biblical basis for corporately growing in our faith and for thinking through our values and our mission as we begin to reach out to others who do not currently belong to a Christian church. Thinking Biblically is essential to our work in this arena of God's kingdom.

Which *specific* verses from Philippians 1-2 apply to this story?

If this tale took place here in our town, how might the storyline go?

What does the character of God—*who* He is and *what* He's like—have to do with both the screen story and *our* story?

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

ACTION ITEM - Read John 17, Jesus' prayer for his disciples.
Pray about what it means for Jesus to *send us into the world*. (John 17:18)

Next Week - Extra-terrestrial Living

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Guide to Participants' Handout Week Five - Extra-terrestrial Living - Philippians 3

INTRO - getting to know one another

What do you know, either from your own or a friend's experience, about expatriate living? What's easy about it? What's tough?

RETRO - discovering from the past

Read Philippians 3:12-21 in *The Message*. Any initial reactions?

Now read Philippians 3:1-11 in other versions, including the *NIV*.

We can easily see how Jews of Paul's day regarded human religious regulations.

How do we sometimes put our confidence in man-made regulations rather than in the character of God—*who* He is and *what* He's like?

Remember that we are not here to learn how to "be better Christians," but instead to let the gospel predominate. As we get to know God and how good He is (as Paul apparently does), His Holy Spirit can effect any changes needed in both our individual and our corporate life.

In what ways are we Lutherans sometimes like those "good" Jews?

Are there traditions that we've clung to that may take our eyes off of relationship with Christ?

Read Philippians 3:8. "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things..." (*NIV*)

What does Paul seem to understand about the character of God—*who* He is and *what* He's like?

Read Philippians 3:12-16

What did Paul mean by "press on toward the goal?" (*NIV*, v. 14)

How does that translate to our lives?

What does pressing on look like?

For what purpose did Christ "take hold" of Paul (v. 12)?

Help your group to think through the differences between "pressing on" for pilgrims vs. settlers—that's the point of this week's study.

See Acts 9:10-16.

How might this story apply to us here in our congregation as we think about reaching people who don't know Christ?

Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Colossians 2:7 *NLT*

Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 5, continued

Read Philippians 3:17-21

What does it mean to have our "citizenship in heaven?"

Look again at the background information for lesson one. Recall that Philippi was a Roman colony of retired military men: such an outpost was, thus, imbued with Roman values including Roman dress, Latin language, and law. "Nowhere was there greater pride in Roman citizenship than in these outposts of Rome." (Barclay, 122)

How would focusing on our "citizenship in heaven" affect how we live as individuals? As families? As the Body of Christ here in our town?

How does *pressing on* and *taking hold* fit in with such extra-terrestrial living?

"The church is a colony, an island of one culture in the middle of another. In baptism our citizenship is transferred from one dominion to another, and we become, in whatever culture we find ourselves, resident aliens....The message that sustains the colony is not for itself but for the whole world—the colony having significance only as God's means for saving the whole world. The colony is God's means of a major offensive against the world, for the world."

(Resident Aliens, 12, 51)

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

ACTION ITEM

Think about Jesus' directive that we are to be salt, light, a city on a hill. (Matthew 5:13-16)

How do those Sermon on the Mount images align with Philippians 3?

Next Week - Actually Going

Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Colossians 2:7 *NLT*

Leader's Week Six Background Reading

**We stand at a pivotal time
in the history of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
We must determine the
course of our mission—both present and future.
Are we going to be a church *in mission*,
or a church *in remission*?**

From: "Igniting the Mission: A Call to Action
A Vision for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod"
Gerald B. Kieschnick, September 2003

This week's group time should "connect the dots" from the previous weeks' "growing" to our mission of "going" outside our church walls and into the surrounding community with the Gospel. Tough questions need to be tackled if we are to bring Philippians from the academic realm into real life. As we read last week, our "colony" only retains significance as we continue in God's mission of "saving the whole world." The Mission Statement of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod puts God's mission in these terms:

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.

The key questions this week again arise out of an understanding of God's character—*who* He is and *what* He's like—as we consider moving "in grateful response to God's grace . . . to make known the love of Christ." That *making known beyond* our driveways may involve radical changes in how we "do" church. In fact, it might mean we need to quit *doing church* and instead start *being church* wherever we are, day in and day out.

We need to look at our calendars and our checkbooks—both individual and corporate—and honestly assess how we're doing and what corrective actions need to take place. Do we need to modify how we spend God's resources of time and money? Do we need to go even further and *cease doing some of the things we currently do* in order to do what's *really important*? What'll it take for us to actually get out the door and touch people with the Gospel? Are we willing? **Please pray that God's passion for His mission will grow in our hearts.**

President Kieschnick's full statement may be found online at: www.lcms.org > Ministry Areas--President's Office > A Call to Action > A Call to Action: Igniting the Mission.

The Mission Statement may be found at www.lcms.org > Ministry Areas--President's Office > "ONE" Vision > Mission Statement.

Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all he has done. Colossians 2:7 *NLT*

Guide to Participants' Handout Week Six - Actually Going - Philippians 4

INTRO - getting to know one another.

Have you ever experienced a situation in which the Gospel was shared in a personal—maybe even one-on-one—manner? What was that like?

RETRO - discovering from the past

Read Philippians 4:4-9 from *The Message*.

Any initial reactions? Now read the whole chapter in another version.

See Philippians 4:1 in NIV. Note the “therefore” of v. 1.

To what previous concept/s—throughout the whole book—may Paul be referring?

Allow group members time to look for their favorite passages from the book, but also be ready to refer to a wide variety of Paul's injunctions to them: especially 1:9-10, 18, 27-28; 2:2, 5-7, 12-13, 16; 3:7-8, 12-14.

Philippians 4:2-9 lists the ways in which Paul wants to make sure the Philippians continue to “stay on track.” What are they?

Where do you hear the gospel in these words? Recall the “mission” to which God had called Paul — Acts 9:15-16.

Many Jews viewed these Gentiles as outside the flock and less important to God than they, the chosen people.

See Acts 20:22-25, 36-38. What did such resolution to “complete the task” cost Paul?

As a good Jew, Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost—one of the three festivals requiring Jewish males to appear there (see Deut. 16:16; Acts 20:16). Remember that Philippians was written while Paul is in prison. Acts 20 assures us that even though he knew going to Jerusalem would endanger him, Paul had “set his face” (as resolutely as Jesus in Luke 9:51) in that direction so that he could “complete the task...of testifying to the gospel . . .”

In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of the LCMS is vigorously to make known the love of Christ.

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Mission Statement

How did he balance the rewards and the cost?

What might it take for us in our church to take the Gospel outside our doors and into the community surrounding us?

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Guide to Participant Handout, Lesson 6, continued

What are the impediments?

How might understanding God's character—*who* He is and *what* He's like—transform the way we live our lives both individually and corporately? (See Romans 12:1-2.)

Paul would insist the gospel is unchained. Are we, then, the only impediments? Discuss.

*NOTE: Make a list of the group's insights into:
 what God might be calling our church to...
 how we might be impeding the process...
 what we might need to learn and to do in order to accomplish His mission.*

THEO - going to God in prayer and song

Break into small prayer groups to address these issues. Gather back together in the large group to share insights gained during prayer.

What's Next?

Tonight's a good time to ask if any would like to continue meeting as a small group, or who'd be willing to host or lead a new Going and Growing small group in the future, or discuss how the group itself might tackle some of the ideas generated above.

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Alternative Reading from *The Message*

Weekly alternative readings in Philippians from Eugene Peterson's *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* follow. These may be printed out and distributed weekly to encourage participants to listen to Paul's words as if written to us today. While *The Message* is clearly a paraphrase, and not a translation, such a Bible version can help us hear the words of Paul with new ears.

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Alternative Reading Week One - A Work Begun - Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11

³Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. ⁴Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. ⁵I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. ⁶There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears. . . .

⁹So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings ¹⁰so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: ¹¹bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.

From: *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson. Copyright, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Alternative Reading Week Two - Chained or Unchained? - Philippians 1:12-14, 20-21, 27-29

¹²I want to report to you, friends, that my imprisonment here has had the opposite of its intended effect. Instead of being squelched, the Message has actually prospered. ¹³All the soldiers here, and everyone else too, found out that I'm in jail because of this Messiah. That piqued their curiosity, and now they've learned all about him. ¹⁴Not only that, but most of the Christians here have become far more sure of themselves in the faith than ever, speaking out fearlessly about God, about the Messiah. . . .

²⁰I can hardly wait to continue on my course. I don't expect to be embarrassed in the least. On the contrary, everything happening to me in this jail only serves to make Christ more accurately known, regardless of whether I live or die. They didn't shut me up; they gave me a pulpit! ²¹Alive, I'm Christ's messenger; dead, I'm his bounty. Life versus even more life! I can't lose. . . .

²⁷Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ. Let nothing in your conduct hang on whether I come or not. Your conduct must be the same whether I show up to see things for myself or hear of it from a distance. Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people's trust in the Message, the good news, ²⁸not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God. ²⁹There's far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There's also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting.

From: *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson. Copyright, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

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Alternative Reading Week Three - Completed Joy - Philippians 2:5-11

⁵Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. ⁶He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. ⁷Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! ⁸Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death--and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.

⁹Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, ¹⁰so that all created beings in heaven and on earth--even those long ago dead and buried--will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, ¹¹and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

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Alternative Reading Week Four - Shining Like Stars - Philippians 2:12-18

¹²What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. ¹³That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

¹⁴Do everything readily and cheerfully--no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! ¹⁵Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night ¹⁶so I'll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns. You'll be living proof that I didn't go to all this work for nothing.

¹⁷Even if I am executed here and now, I'll rejoice in being an element in the offering of your faith that you make on Christ's altar, a part of your rejoicing. ¹⁸But turnabout's fair play--you must join me in my rejoicing. Whatever you do, don't feel sorry for me.

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Alternative Reading Week Five - Extra-terrestrial Living - Philippians 3:12-21

¹²I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. ¹³Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward--to Jesus. ¹⁴I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back. ¹⁵So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision--you'll see it yet! ¹⁶Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.

¹⁷Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. ¹⁸There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. ¹⁹But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites. ²⁰But there's far more to life for us. **We're citizens of high heaven!** We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.

From: *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene Peterson. Copyright, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

Alternative Reading Week Six - Actually Going - Philippians 4: 4-9

⁴Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! ⁵Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! ⁶Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. ⁷Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

⁸Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious--the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. ⁹Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

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Suggested Hymns and Songs for *Growing and Going* small groups

Week One – A Work Begun -- Philipians 1: 1-11

- He Who Began a Good Work in You* Jon Mohr © 1987 Jonathan Mark Music
 ("He who started the work will be faithful to complete it in you.")
- Let It Be Said of Us* Steve Fry, © 1994 Maranatha! Music
 ("Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song/ 'Til the likeness of Jesus be through us made known.")
- My Hope is Built on Nothing Less* Edward Mote, John Stainer, public domain
 ("His oath, His covenant, His blood/Sustain me in the raging flood.")
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* Joachim Neander, public domain
 ("Ponder anew what the almighty can do as with his love he befriends thee.")
- For the Glory of Your Name* Gary Sadler, John Hartley, ©1999 worshiptogether.com songs
 ("Let us live that we may serve You, overflowing with Your praise
 For the glory of Your name...For the glory of Your name.")
- My Hope is in the Lord* Anne Barbour, ©2002 Barbour Cuts Music
 ("His tender mercies come with every rising sun to meet the sinner in his brokenness.")
- Shout to the Lord* Darlene Zschech, Hillsong Music Australia
 ("Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.")

Week Two – Chained or Unchained? -- Philipians 1:12-30

- Jesus Shall Reign* Isaac Watt, John Hatton, public domain
 ("Blessings abound where'er He reigns; The prisoners leap to lose their chains.")
- A Mighty Fortress* Martin Luther, public domain
 ("Let this world's tyrant rage; in battle we'll engage.")
- Holy, Holy, Holy* Reginald Heber. John Dykes. Public Domain
 ("All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.")
- Here I Am* Paul Oakley, Kingsway's Thankyou Music
 ("You broke the curse, You broke the chains/In victory from death you rose again, Thank you, Lord.")
- Be Unto Your Name* DeShazo/ Sadler, Integrity's Hosanna! Music
 ("We are the broken, You are the Healer, Jesus Redeemer, mighty to save.")
- Holy God, We Praise Your Name* Clarence A. Walworth, Ignaz Franz, public domain
 ("And from morn to set of sun/Through the Church the song goes on.")
- Let It Be Said of Us* Steve Fry, 1994 Maranatha! Music,
 ("Let the cross be our glory and the Lord be our song/'Til the likeness of Jesus be through us made known.")

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Week Three – Completed Joy -- Philippians 2:1-11

Indescribable Laura Story, worshiptogether.com; sixsteps Music/Gleaning Publishing
 (“Incomparable, unchangeable You see the depths of my heart
 and You love me the same, You are amazing God!”)

Lamb of God Twila Paris, 1985 Straightway Music
 (“I was so lost I should have died/But You have brought me to Your side
 To be led by Your staff and rod/And to be called a lamb of God.”)

Go to Dark Gethsemane Montgomery, Redhead, public domain
 (“‘It is finished!’ hear him cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die.”)

Just Let Me Say Geoff Bullock, Hillsongs Australia
 (“And the depth of grace, the forgiveness found to be called a child of God
 Just makes me say how much I love You, O my Savior, my Lord and Friend.”)

Now is the Time Geoff Bullock, Word, Inc.
 (“This love, this hope, this peace of God, this righteousness/This faith, this joy, this life complete in me.”)

Go, My Children Jaroslav Vajda, 1983
 (“In my love’s baptismal river, I have made you mine forever.”)

Shout to the Lord Darlene Zschech, Hillsong Music Australia
 (“Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.”)

Week Four – Shining Like Stars -- Philippians 2:12-18

My Life is in You, Lord Daniel Gardner, Integrity’s Hosanna! Music
 (“I will praise you with all of my life.”)

Beautiful Savior Joseph A. Seiss, traditional, public domain
 (“Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer...”)

Shine, Jesus, Shine Graham Kendrick, Make Way Music
 (“As we gaze on your kingly brightness/So our faces display your likeness...”)

A Mighty Fortress Martin Luther, public domain
 (“Let this world’s tyrant rage/In battle we’ll engage.”)

Hear Our Praises Reuben Morgan, Hillsong Music Australia
 (“May a light shine in the darkness as we walk before the cross.”)

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates Georg Weissel, public domain
 (“...on my life’s pattern shine your face.”)

For All the Saints Ralph Vaughan Williams, William Walsham How, public domain
 (“O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine.”)

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Week Five – Extra-terrestrial Living – Philippians 3:12-21

- Heaven is My Home* Mason/Taylor, public domain
("I'm but a stranger here/Heaven is my home.")
- Holy God, We Praise Your Name* Walworth/ Franz, public domain
("And from morn to set of sun/Through the Church the song goes on.")
- The Church's One Foundation* Samuel Stone, Samuel Wesley, public domain
("Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war/She waits the consummation of peace forevermore.")
- I Will Run to You* Darlene Zschech, Hillsongs, Australia
("Yes I will run the race, 'til I see Your Face, oh let me live in the glory of Your Grace.")
- A Mighty Fortress* Martin Luther, public domain
("Let this world's tyrant rage/In battle we'll engage.")
- Hear Our Praises* Reuben Morgan, Hillsong Music Australia
("May a light shine in the darkness as we walk before the cross.")
- God and Man at Table are Sat Down* Robert Stamps, Dawn Treader Music
("When at last this earth shall pass away, when Jesus and His bride are one to stay
The feast of love is just begun that day.")

Week Six – Actually Going – Philippians 4:1-9

- I, the Lord of Sea and Sky* Daniel Schutte, New Dawn Music
("Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?...
I will go, Lord, if you send me. I will hold your people in my heart.")
- You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore* Gaberain/Marshall, Ediciones Paulinas, Admin. by OCP Pub.
("Sweet Lord, you have looked into my eyes, kindly smiling, you've called out my name.
On the sand I have abandoned my small boat; now with you I will seek other seas.")
- O Master, let Me Walk with Thee* Gladden/Smith, public domain
("Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear, winning word of love.")
- Rise Up, O Saints of God!* Norman O. Forness, Augsburg Fortress
("Christ rose triumphant that your hearts with nobler zeal might burn...
As heirs of God's baptismal grace, His word of hope proclaim.")
- God of Grace and God of Glory* Fosdick/Hughes, public domain
("Grant us wisdom, grant us courage/Lest we miss your kingdom's goal.")
- Jesus, You are My Life* Steve Fry, Maranatha! Music
("Oh, holy fire, love's purest light, burn all desires till You are my one delight.")
- Sent forth by God's blessing* Omer Westendorf, public domain
("With praise and thanksgiving to God ever-living/The tasks of our ev'ryday life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing in love ever caring/Embracing his children of each tribe and race.")

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March 2007. Claire Partlow, MA Theology, and her husband Gene currently serve as lay mission developers in New Jersey. Participant Handouts are available from the Center for U.S. Missions.

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