

Joy's Citizenship Group Leader Notes

We are officially past the halfway point in our Philippians series! We hope that it has been a fruitful time together as your group has gathered to discuss and study God's Word. This week, we will be continuing in Philippians 3:15-4:1, in which there are two ideas that surface in this passage: transformation and perseverance.

The reality is that all believers experience radical transformation the moment they put their faith in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." In a moment, your standing before God goes from condemned to forgiven in Christ. However, more transformation comes as believers mature in their faith. We are transformed into a better representation of God's likeness as we seek to live out our faith better.

Paul also encourages believers to stand firm and persevere. The idea of standing firm in the faith is common throughout the New Testament. In fact, we see Paul, and other New Testament authors, encourage their readers to stand firm 13 times in the text. That should catch our attention! Challenges and obstacles will regularly try to derail us in our faith. We must stand firm in faith, maintaining a regular devotional time, prayer, and receiving encouragement from other believers.

In our discussions this week, we will take a look at the role discipleship plays in in both transformation and perseverance. The Christian walk was never intended to be walked alone. We need people to walk with us in order to spur us on in our faith.



Looking back, who was your favorite coach and/or teacher? What made them great?



Read Philippians 3:15 - 4:1. Looking at verses 15 and 16, what are the "things" Paul is referring to?

This passage flows out of the previous one, so make sure to recap last week with your group (Ph. 3:1-14). Specifically, Paul is referring to verse 12 where he says, "not that I have already obtained all this, or have arrived (or perfect) at my goal." In the end, Paul is pushing believers to work towards perfection to win the prize for which God has called us heavenwards in Christ Jesus.



What does it mean to be a mature Christian?

As Paul stated back in verses 12-14, maturity in the faith is something to strain for, and not something he had obtained yet. Now, he is calling out those that are mature. Paul is effectually saying, "If you are mature, you will realize you are not mature." A good mindset to have, is that there is no such thing as a **mature** Christian. Rather, there are only **maturing** Christians. Thinking that we have arrived in our spiritual growth only gives the enemy a foothold in our lives that can derail the maturity we thought we had.

A more mature Christian is someone that has been a follower of Christ for quite some time. However, years of claiming Christianity isn't the key to maturity. Those years are spent practicing the rhythms of the faith. Rhythms like regular church attendance, daily devotionals, a consistent prayer life, serving the church and local community, generosity, and regular repentance. Living a life with these rhythms will push someone towards maturity in their faith as the years go by.



Read Matthew 28:19-20. What is the overarching command Jesus makes?

Here in the Great Commission, Jesus' overarching command is to make disciples. Notice that the command is not to make converts. Making converts is simple. A literal definition of convert is, "a person who has been persuaded to change their religious faith or other beliefs." Discipleship is hard, and it takes intentionality. Discipleship is where you experience the blood, sweat, and tears of living the Christian life. Making a disciple requires years of a committed relationships with the sole purpose of spiritual growth.



Read Philippians 3:17. Paul, as the more mature believer, calls newer believers to follow his example, along with the examples other more mature Christians. This is the foundation of discipleship. Would you say that you are more of a Paul-like believer, or a newer believer? What is your role in discipleship, and what does that look like in your life?

This seems like a simple question. It is, but many people never put much thought towards their role in discipleship. The purpose of this question is to get people thinking about their role. For those new to faith in Christ, this should be simple to answer. Some people might realize that they have been meandering in their faith for many years without direct guidance from a more mature Christian, or Christians. Others, who are more mature, might find themselves torn as they approach this question with the mindset of Paul - knowing that they have the maturity to disciple other Christians, but recognizing that they themselves still need to keep growing.



Looking at verses 18-21, what is the importance of discipleship as you try to keep an eternal mindset, in the event you are tempted to have an earthly one?

We all have blind spots in our lives. The simple fact of the matter is that Satan knows our blind spots and will capitalize on them every chance he gets. We will always be tempted to have an earthly mindset, no matter how mature we are in faith. We need other believers in our lives that we trust who can see our blind spots and warn us before we crash.

Utilize this time to discuss this importance. Your group is where discipleship happens. Groups are made up of people all across the spectrum of spiritual maturity. Challenge your group members to be more intentional with each other. Perhaps your group could take a moment to commit yourselves to the spiritual growth of each other. Remind them that this requires vulnerability, confidentiality, accountability, and commitment to the goal.



Read Philippians 4:1. Using this verse as an example, what demeanor must we have as we disciple one another?

Paul's demeanor is not that of a lecturer, or a master. Notice the relational bond that was between him and those he disciplined. He cared for these people dearly and wanted to see them stand firm in their faith.

As we discuss discipleship in our groups, we must realize that this same demeanor is required of us. None of this is new to us at HDC. This is Oikos. The gospel spreads through relationships and so does spiritual growth.