

## Philippians Session 1

1:3-11 – New Heart

**Resource:** 'A Life worth Living' by Nicky Gumbel, Chapter 1

**Timing:** 40-50 minutes, then leading into ministry

**Buzz groups:** Suggestions are boxed, pairs or groups of 3-4 will work best

**Illustrations:** Suggestions are noted, but your own ideas and stories are preferable

**Focus:** Major on the one or two points most relevant to your group

**Icebreaker:** Which Christian, living or historical, known personally to you or not, do you most admire and why?

### Introduction

Introduce this week on *New Heart*

Key Point: God is at work in us

Key Verse: "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (v.6)

Share a short example of God working change in your own life, i.e. "I used to struggle with anger/laziness/greed/shopping/ambition/depression, I remember once I..." The story doesn't have to be amusing or dramatic (although both are good), just personal.

Turn to your neighbor and share a similar story about the change God has made to your own life

### 1. Be Confident in God's Power (v.3-6)

The Point: Church in Philippi was very obviously established by God's power:

See Acts 16 for how the church in Philippi began

Initially Paul/Silas couldn't get into Asia or Bithynia (Acts 16:7)

→ "come over to Macedonia" (v9)

→ Lydia's conversion, stay at her house (11-15)

→ pursued by fortune-teller, evil spirit came out of her (16-18)

→ fortune-teller's owners furious she had lost powers (means of income), Paul and Silas put in prison (19-24)

→ praising and praying, earthquake, miraculous release (25-28)

→ jailer's household converted (29-36)

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As he writes to the church in Philippi, therefore, Paul has great confidence in what God is capable of doing

Similar for us: the way God has worked in our lives so far should give us confidence in what he is able to do in the future (v.6)

It makes sense: God wouldn't get us to Alpha, forgive us, convert us, take us through so many adventures, then suddenly drop us!

Illustration: Before the evening ask someone in your pastorate to share their testimony of their encounter with the Holy Spirit and the change that made to them

Application: Keep a journal of our own "journey in faith", jotting down answers to prayer and times when we've seen God at work. This builds our faith.

## 2. Build Relationships with other Christians (v.7-8)

The Point: Paul has a deep love for the Christians in Philippi

*"I have you in my heart" (v.7)*

*"I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus" (v.8)*

Shared love for Jesus and shared experiences of God's power at work in our lives provides a great foundation for genuine friendship.

We can be intentional about treasuring and furthering the most mature of Christian friendships by beginning joint projects together and challenging or mentoring others.

Illustration: Tell a story about when God has opened your own heart to care for a person you previously didn't care for.

Application: Note down two other Christians you would like to get to know better. Resolve to text, e-mail or call them to invite them for dinner, or meet them for coffee.

Have you sensed a greater love/compassion for people since you began to meet with God (give an example)? What things cause this love/compassion to stop growing?

## 3. Pray for Personal Growth (v.9-11)

The Point: look how Paul prays for the Christians in Philippi: *"And this is my prayer..."*

a) Love

- *"that your love may abound more and more"* lit. overflow
- What are the specific people/situations we need more love for/in at the moment?

b) Understanding

- *"knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best"*
  - In what areas would you like God to give you more understanding/wisdom at the moment?
- cf *James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God"*

c) Holiness

- *"may be pure and blameless...filled with the fruit of righteousness"*
- "pure" = Gk "unmixed"
- Is there a particular individual you look up in the "holiness stakes"? What is it about them that you would especially like to emulate?

This kind of life will always be fruitful with the *"fruit of righteousness"* (v.11)

Illustration: Read out an obituary or description of someone like Mother Theresa, Florence Nightingale or William Wilberforce.

Application: Get people to write privately on a piece of paper a particular person or situation where they want more love, understanding or holiness. Allow people appropriate time to think. Consider playing a CD to give background music.

### Ideas for Ministry

- All stand in silence. Ask everyone to imagine being part of a group where everyone was confident in God's power, in healthy genuine friendships with one another, and personally growing in love, understanding and holiness. Invite prayers out loud asking God to build such a community amongst the group.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to come and assist us to pray prophetically into each other's situation that we noted down earlier. Break into 3's, praying for one another first without sharing the detail of one another's situation, then to break and briefly discuss anything the Holy Spirit seems to be illuminating about the individual situations before praying into that particular situation.