

Philippians Session 2

1:12-21 – New Purpose

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' by Nicky Gumbel, Chapter 2

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: Dream a little! If you had every skill, training and ability and could have any job, what would you choose to do other than whatever you currently do?

Introduction

Recap last week on *New Heart*

Key Point: God is at work in us

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

Introduce this week on *New Purpose*

Key Point: we can and must live out the gospel in every situation

Key Verse: "what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (v.12)

Share a well-known example of someone who has turned disadvantage or disastrous events into positives. Better still share a personal story, however small it may seem.

We all have similar stories, big or small. Share with your neighbour an example in your own life of where bad or difficult things turned out for the good.

1. Take Every Gospel Opportunity (v.12-14)

The Point: wherever we are we must identify and take the opportunities to share the gospel

Paul turns imprisonment (Acts 21-28) into an opportunity to share the gospel

This frees others to speak about Jesus too (v14 "most of the brothers and sisters")

Fear – perhaps of unpopularity or social isolation – is a very common emotion that stops us sharing the gospel, so Paul encourages us to be courageous (v.14)

Illustration: Many find and share Christ in prison – briefly tell the stories of Jonathan Aitken, Tony Anthony or other stories of people finding Christ in prison.

Application: Sometimes we all feel chained to our jobs, trapped in the home, or fearful of others. Ask a friend to meet you for coffee or a drink, and specifically ask them to help you see the opportunities you have.

2. Make the Gospel the Priority in Life (v.15-18)

The Point: the way we go about sharing the gospel matters

Some took advantage of Paul's imprisonment to advance their own reputation (v.17)

By contrast, Paul's example gives us three tips on sharing the gospel:

About our *motive*:

- aim for purity, but don't wait for them to be perfect before starting!
- be careful criticising other Christians whose motives we question

About our *message*:

- don't change it to make it easier to believe or less offensive (Galatians 1:8)
- focus on Christ ("*preach Christ*" in v.15, 17, 18)

About the *means*:

- Paul is not saying that the end justifies the means!
- use ways consistent with the message, (e.g. not the Spanish Inquisition)

Illustration: Share a personal story of when you didn't do the right thing because you were worried about your motive. Compare it to another time when you acted despite such doubts.

Application: Think of a different way of reaching someone who seems deaf to our attempts to share the gospel with them so far

Share an example of someone you have each been trying to talk to about your faith for a long time and the different ways you have tried to reach them. *or* Before we became a Christian, what things made us interested to know more?

3. Make the Gospel the Purpose in Life (v.19-26)

The Point: we are here to know Christ and to make him known

Paul wasn't scared, since he considered death a *gain* (v.21) since he'd meet Jesus
But he lived on for *Christ* (v.21) to work so that others might know (v.22, 24-26)

Illustration: many famous people have endured great hardship for the gospel. Find a dramatic example and retell it. Emphasise were it not for the gospel purpose they wouldn't have carried on.

Application: write this answer to the 'question of life' in your diary or reset your logon password as "2liveisChrist"

4. Make the Gospel the Pattern for Life (v.27-30)

The Point: living a gospel life means actions, not just words

Conduct (v.27) means 'live as citizens' – our true citizenship is heaven not earth

But the 'heaven' lifestyle is sometimes in sharp contrast to the world's

Our life communicates our beliefs, both in our individual and corporate lives

Graham Tomlin talks and writes about living "provocatively" in ways that make people ask *why*?

[Get a copy of his book "Provocative Church", hold it up and recommend it]

Such a lifestyle is impossible without prayer and the help of the Holy Spirit (v.19)

Illustration: Share an amusing story or anecdote about a time when you or someone else provoked the question "why" for all the *wrong* reasons – then say the same effect works in the positive too!

Application: On the way to or from work tomorrow, or some other opportunity, to think of a lifestyle change we could make which would be unspoken but provocative.

Ideas for Ministry

- Put on some music and invite people to imagine themselves in the different roles they have (e.g. home, family, workplace, relationships), living with a gospel purpose and lifestyle, following gospel principles and taking gospel opportunities. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and give us a picture of what our lives might look like if this were the case.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show us provocative lifestyle changes which we could make. Hand out post-its and pens and invite people to jot down anything God is showing them about what their lives might look like in some of these roles viewed with a gospel purpose for them.
- Thank God for the places he has put us and acknowledge He knows the challenges and fears there. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to overcome these.