

Philippians Session 6

4:1-9 – New Lifestyle

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' by Nicky Gumbel, Chapter 8

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: What's the best present you've ever had?

Introduction

Recap last week on *New Ambition*

Key Point: We should eagerly pursue God-given and God-focussed ambitions

Key Verse: *"I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus" (3:14)*

Introduce this week on *New Lifestyle*

Key Point: We must put into practice everything we learn about the Lord

Key Verse: *"Whatever you have learned or received from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (v.9)*

Tell a short personal story about how you learned to become good at a sport, musical instrument, work or domestic skill, etc.

"Practice Makes Perfect" – in what areas of your life are you currently learning new skills or competencies? Share with one another how you're learning these things.

1. Build good relationships with other Christians (v.2-3)

The Point: unresolved disagreements split churches, good friendships build them

Eudokia and Syntyche have fallen out with each other (v.2)

Paul urges each to take the initiative to reach agreement, and for others to help

Illustrate: Tell a personal story about a personality clash you or a friend overcame

Application: Name the person in your mind who you disagree or clash with at church (or even at work), resolve to find common ground with them and to pray for them.

2. Build a good relationship with Jesus (v.4-7)

The Point: a firm relationship with God acts as a sure foundation for our whole lives

Paul gives 3 keys on how to stand firm in Jesus (v.1):

1) *"Enjoy the Lord"* (v.4)

→ optimism is good, as is rejoicing in good jobs, happy marriages, great friendships

→ but rejoicing in the Lord is the source of true joy and strength

→ central theme of Paul's letter ("rejoice" 16 times!), twice here for emphasis

2) *"Expect the Lord"* (v.5)

→ *"gentleness"* (v.5) = "moderation, graciousness" and "willing to forego retaliation"

→ we need not defend ourselves because God is coming to vindicate us

→ *"the lord is near"* double sense of (i) time, (ii) presence, slight paradox:

→ we live in the 'now and not yet', expect him with excitement and abide in presence

3) "Entreat the Lord" (v.6-7)

- in prayer we leave our worries with God and receive his peace in exchange
- we should be specific about every situation we face (v.6)
- a journal/diary may help to note answers, so we can pray "with thanksgiving" (v.6)
- "peace" (v.7) means "wholeness, well-being, oneness with God, every blessing"!

Illustration: Tell a brief story of when you were anxious, prayed, and got God's peace

Application: Find and guard a daily time of prayer, worship and bible reading to build our relationship with God. If you keep one, review your journal or prayer diary and give thanks to God for all the prayers he has answered.

Share with each other your personal stories of answered prayer and restored relationships. [Ask a few to feed back, then offer a short prayer of thanks]

3. Build a good thought-life (v.8)

The Point: we must set our mind on good things, not feed them mental junk food

What we think effects who we are, and every area of our life (Matt 15:19-20)

Our culture constantly tempts us not to think morally good or pure thoughts

We evict wrong thoughts by letting right thoughts take residence

Illustration: read out some one-line statements from recent press cuttings or celebrity interviews that highlight the prevalent worldview in culture we soak up so easily.

Application: Find 5 minutes over the next few days to review what you've said over the last few days and what you've fed your mind on (books, magazines, TV, etc) – what changes can you make to improve your thought life?

4. Build on the example of other Christians you respect (v.9)

The Point: we can learn by following the example set by other godly men and women

Paul asks them to follow not just his teaching, but his *lifestyle*, his words *and* actions

The supreme example is Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), but we learn from one another too

Illustration: Briefly tell the group about an older Christian you respect and why

Application: Think who that person is for you. Resolve to spend some time with them – join them in a task, or invite them for dinner – so that you can learn from them.

Conclude

Imagine what peace we could unleash in our lives by building good relationships with Jesus and one another, building a healthy thought life, and building on great examples of others – wouldn't that be amazing?

Ideas for Ministry

- 50:50 prayer: one half to ask God to build the relationships in the pastorate, the other half to ask God to build everyone's relationship with Himself. Then open prayer about either issue.
- As one large group ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us any areas of unforgiveness, offence or bitterness against others that we can repent of and be set free from – then turn into 2's/3's to pray that God would grant an opportunity to put it right.
- As one large group ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us any areas where our motivations are not pure, or where our thought-life is unclean, out of control or disordered. Turn into 2's/3's to pray for healing, purity and self-control. If the group is comfy with it, encourage the smaller groups to be just men or women.