

Philippians Session 4
2:12-18 – New Responsibility

Resource: 'A Life worth Living' by Nicky Gumbel, Chapter 4

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 was the last film, play or music concert you went to – was it good?

Introduction

Recap last week on *New Attitude*

Key Point: Our lives are re-shaped by Jesus so that His attitudes become our own

Key Verse: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (v.5)

Introduce this week on New Responsibility

Key Point: Our freedom in Christ leads to a new responsibility to live out the gospel

Key Verse: "shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life" (v.15-16)

Share a personal story (however small the story may seem to you) about a time when you took responsibility to live out or share the gospel with someone else.

Tell each other about an influential Christian in your own journey coming to faith. What was it about them that provoked your interest in what they believed?

1. Take Responsibility for the Transformation of Our Own Life (v.12-13)

The Point: we all have a responsibility to *work out* the freedom Jesus *works in* us

"Therefore" (v.12) means we are obliged to respond to Jesus' example (2:1-11)

"Salvation" (v.12) means freedom – freedom and responsibility go hand in hand

It's a critical task ("*fear and trembling*" v.12) to do what God's specific will is for us

It is possible to have a 'saved soul and a wasted life'

Working out our salvation/freedom means fulfilling our potential as the whole person we were created to be

Illustration: Share how you found your "calling", or what you're doing to seek and pursue it

Application: What is stopping us fulfilling our potential at work, in the home, in our relationships? Are we trapped by habits or attitudes that we need God to break?

Imagine you're in a coffee break at work, or with friends, discussing British celebrities. How would you share the difference between society's view of what a fulfilling life is, with what you believe? [Get some feedback. Encourage everyone to try and put this into practice next time they find themselves in a similar situation.]

2. Take Responsibility for the Transformation of Society (v.14-16a)

The Point: It is our responsibility and privilege to hold out the gospel to society

(v.15) “crooked” means ‘warped activities’ and “*depraved*” means ‘distorted values’

Our lives should stand out in contrast – like *shining stars* (v.15)

→ not complaining (v.14) or grumbling against God (see Exodus 15:24; 16:7)

→ not arguing (v.14) or rebelling intellectually against God

→ praise of God and others is the opposite of these (Hebrews 13:5)

→ being pure and blameless (v.15) means being good and seen to be good

There should be a family likeness about our lives (“*children of God*” v.15)

We must “hold out the word of life” (v.16) to the many in society who are dissatisfied because they have never found the relationship with God they were made for.

Illustration: Read out a positive press clipping or quote about Christians transforming society. The Christian Aid or Tearfund websites are a place to start if you don’t know of a personal example.

Application: Our values shine through our behaviour. What would a stranger conclude we believed about life if they were only able to observe our behaviour?

3. Take Responsibility for our role in the Church (v.16b-18)

The Point: ministry is pouring ourselves out for others

Paul views all fellow Christians as his friends (v.12)

He loves serving them – he really enjoys it even though it costs him (v.17)

Paul’s attitude is like an athlete who trains even if he doesn’t feel like it (v.16)

He longs for them to know the joy of serving others too (v.18)

Illustration: Find a quote from one of the people you used in the previous illustration (or similar), describing how they really enjoy what they’re doing despite the personal cost of it

Application: Sometimes we can’t wait to serve! Other times we’re tempted not to visit, call or talk to others, or even pray for others, because we don’t feel like it. Pushing onwards in those times communicates our deep motivation of love for others.

Conclusion

“Imagine a world where...” Read out a section of Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech (or similar), perhaps even find a recording of it on CD/DVD.

Then challenge everyone to imagine what our pastorate, church, family, home, workplace would be like if we lived in the way we’ve talked about tonight.

Ideas for Ministry

- In groups of three or four share our ambition for the different areas of our lives. Pray together, asking God to show us how to fulfil that potential. Commit to working with God to overcome any habits, fears or attitudes that get in the way.
- Confess those times when we’ve failed to “shine like stars” and live any differently to the world. Ask God to forgive us and change us.
- Pray in groups of three or four, asking God to show how and where we can serve in the Church in an area where most of the time we’d really enjoy