

Every Thought Captive

Sept. 15, 2019

To *KNOW* Christ and one another more deeply,
To *CARE* for one another in truth and in love,
To *GROW* as followers of Jesus,
To *SERVE* those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalm 1:1-2

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)

Practice lectio divina (sacred reading) by attentively reading Psalm 1:1-2 aloud several times. Enter into a time of worship through prayer by using a word or a phrase from the passage.

Icebreaker

Share a song that you have had in your head over the past 24 hours.

Text for Discussion: Philippians 4:2-9

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Every challenge is an opportunity to persevere, to grow... just as each is an excuse to become pessimistic, angry and closed off. Though we may be conditioned to respond in certain ways, we always have a choice. That cannot be taken from us. Our mindset is a choice, which needs to be re-forged to inhabit the life God intends for us in Christ (Rom 12:2, Col 3:2, 1 Cor 2:16).

What does it mean to set our minds on Jesus rather than “the things of man” (Mark 8:33)? This is what Philippians 4 seeks to address, revealing how the Christian mindset plays out in relational conflicts, in our everyday posture, in how we deal with anxiety, and in what we choose to focus on.

In relational conflicts in the church: Though we often disagree about important matters, Christians are called to raise our sights and “agree in the Lord” (v2) – to acknowledge His sovereignty over our lives. In the heat of conflict, it’s easy to become self-righteous. We need to remind ourselves that we are sisters and brothers in Christ. And as we recall this new identity, we must choose compassion, kindness, forgiveness and mercy.

In our inner disposition and our outer posture: Joy is the signature mark of the Christian mindset (v4), even in the face of difficult circumstances. We are therefore to show reasonableness, gentleness, moderation and forbearance to everyone (v5) because the Lord is near. We do not insist on what we deserve or what justice would demand. We are ready to submit to maltreatment without malice.

In how we deal with anxiety: Worry offers the illusion that we can do something about things we cannot control, while offering no semblance of peace. The church has an ancient tradition of meditation, focused on filling the mind with God’s truth, promises and presence. Just as important as clearing ourselves of bad thinking is filling ourselves with the mindset of Christ, who promises to bring peace to our hearts and minds (v7). It takes time. It’s a daily choice and a daily struggle as prayer and meditation reinforce our dependence on God.

In what we choose to focus on: Paul calls us to set our perspective on whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is virtuous, whatever is worthy of praise. This

sounds like good advice, but not practical or practicable. But this is because our hearts are set on things we have no control over. Blaming others or our circumstances only further enslaves us. How then do we learn to be poised, cheerful, grounded and free?

This isn't about self-sufficiency or the effort required to earn God's love. Christ is strong, not us. In Him, we are loved and safe, and so we are free to run towards what is already ours in Jesus. We therefore train by filling our heart and mind with God's truth, allowing scripture to play a daily, central role. In Christ, we have a choice to practice these things. Because as Isaiah 26:3 promises, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is fixed on You because he trusts You."

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How is the Christian mindset not a bar to live up to, but rather a reality to live into?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

-
- What stood out to you in the sermon this week?
 - How is the Christian mindset not a bar to live up to, but rather a reality to live into?
 - Discuss the thought that the freedom to choose our attitude can never be taken away from us.
 - Relational Conflict (vv. 2-3) What does it mean to "agree in the Lord." See also Philippians 2:2
 - What is the mind of Christ like? How do you know if you have it? What prevents us from having the mind of Christ?
 - What does having your name in the "book of life" mean (see also Revelation 20:15 and 21:27)? How did your name get in that book?
 - How would this reminder help with relational conflict? When have you seen or experienced this type of reconciliation?
 - Everyday Posture (vv. 4-5) What comes to your mind when you are exhorted to rejoice not once but twice?
 - Explain how knowing that the Lord is nearby helps us with an attitude of rejoicing. Do you have a personal example?
 - "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone." v. 5. What would you like to be known for?
 - Dealing with Anxiety (vv. 6-7) List everything we learn about God in these 2 verses.
 - What do we learn about dealing with anxiety? What can we replace anxiety with?
 - What are the promises in these verses and how do they encourage us in struggles of worry or anxiety?
 - Mindset Focus (vv. 8-9) How are we instructed to reset our mindset in these verses?
 - What are some things that are opposite of this list? What does thinking about these opposites cause us to do?
 - What do you find yourself thinking about most often?
 - What practical advice with a promise do you get from verse 9? Who do you know like that? Can you say that with Paul?
 - What aspect of the Christian mindset would you, on your own, like to work on this week? What would it look like to fill your mind with God's truth and promises this week?

Prayer

Pray together about what it might look like to have the mind of Christ in your relationships this week.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spiritual Formation Experience:

Meditate on and memorize Philippians 4:6-8. Journal about how the experience of meditating and memorizing helped you with your Christian mindset. Read your journal entry to the group next time you meet.

Missional Experiment:

Discuss some real ways that we can help each other have the mind of Christ. How would it affect us personally? our family? our neighborhood? our workplace? our city? Brainstorm some thoughts and ideas. Come up with a

missional plan to better love God and bless people in our spheres of influence by having a stronger Christian mindset.