

Study 7

OUR CITIZENSHIP



Ruins of a Christian church dating from 550 AD, known as Basilica B, Philippi, Greece

Background

How do you learn? As a young pastor I actively sought out older, wiser, pastors to glean from their experience and knowledge. Whenever I attended a pastors' conference I would try to take advantage of any opportunity to talk with a guest speaker by sitting down with them and asking questions. This was one way I would learn. But I also found that I didn't necessarily have to do this to learn from an experienced preacher and pastor. I also found that I could learn from a less experienced or polished speakers. I realised that I could learn *indirectly* and *positively* from those pastors who did things well; and, I could learn indirectly *negatively* from those who did *not* do things well. In this section of Philippians, Paul also encourages the Philippians to do the same - to learn from positive and negative examples.

154. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:41:51 pm
Phil. 3:17 ¶ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

155. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:41:09 pm
1Cor. 4:16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

156. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:45:09 pm
I do not think Paul was being arrogant in asking the Philippians and Corinthians to follow his example because they were being subject to the examples of false teachers.

157. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:47:37 pm
If you are sincerely following Christ as best you can, then it is fair to consider yourself as an example for other believers to follow. But, if you are not living a Christ-honouring life then you might be reluctant to consider yourself an example.

158. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:52:38 pm
Phil. 3:17 ¶ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

159. Dr. Andrew Corbett

1 June 2022 at 10:52:45 pm
Paul does not state that he is the ONLY example for the Philippians to follow. The fact that he says to follow the example of other solid Christians indicates that he was not being arrogant.

160. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:34:29 am
Phil. 3:17 ¶ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

161. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:34:01 am
1Cor. 4:16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me.
1Cor. 4:17 That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

162. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:32:58 am
1Th. 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

Learn From Examples

Paul seemed confident that he was living an honourable Christ-like life.

- 154 ~ 1. Read **Philippians 3:17** and **First Corinthians 4:16**. Was Paul being arrogant in urging his readers to do this? Explain.

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Could *you* make this same kind of request? Why or why not?

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- 158 2. Consider **Philippians 3:17** again. Was Paul telling the Philippians to *only* follow *his* example? If Paul was or wasn't, how might this change our assessment of his possible arrogance?

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It is important to note two things about Paul's appeal. Firstly, *imitation* of a teacher's character and way of life was a very Jewish idea. When a rabbi (a Jewish teacher/pastor) took on disciples (*students*), his students were not just expected to listen to teaching - they were expected to observe and imitate his life. Thus, when Paul appeals to the Philippians (**3:17**, the Corinthians (**1Cor. 4:16**) and the Thessalonians (**1Thess. 1:6**) to imitate him, he is simply following in the tradition of a Jewish concept of discipleship. Secondly, his appeal is always on the basis that he was following Christ. In other words, his appeal to believers was to ultimately follow Christ. Therefore, whenever a Christian leader is not living in a Christ-honouring way, those that he or she are leading need to consider very carefully if they can continue to follow them.

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3. Every Christian leader is going to make mistakes. Is this a reason for refusing to submit to them as your spiritual leader? Discuss.

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- 164 ~ Not every Christian leader lives a '**cruciformed**' life (**Matt. 16:24**). It is very difficult to see what is really in the heart of a Christian leader unless you can see how they handle: (i) ease and leisure; and, (ii) hardship and adversity. I think that

163. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:24:40 am

Hopefully your discussion will recognise the difference between making a mistake - even one involving a sin - and a mistake that is a reflection on the leader's straying from the truth. For example, if a leader confessed that they had had a lustful thought for someone they were not married to, and had subsequently repented, this would not necessarily disqualify them as a leader. But if, on the other hand, they had been caught in an adulterous relationship and had not repented but instead appealed for forgiveness based on God's grace, this should be viewed quite differently.

164. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:34:38 am

Cruciform mean "in the shape of the Cross. To live a cruciformed life is to lay down your life, endure suffering for the sake of Christ, and follow Him no matter what the cost.

165. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 10:32:27 am

Matt. 16:24 ¶ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

166. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:43:14 am
Phil. 1:29 For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,
Phil. 1:30 engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

167. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:45:52 am
Phil. 3:18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

168. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:46:23 am
They had become 'enemies of the Cross'.

169. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:47:34 am
Paul grieved for them and was deeply upset for them.

170. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:49:58 am
Phil. 3:19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things

171. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:50:21 am
Their end would be 'destruction'. This should not be thought of as 'annihilation' (ceasing to exist) but as eternal separation from God.

172. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 10:54:21 am
Phil. 3:19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things

173. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 11:03:41 am
b.

174. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 11:03:51 am
a.

175. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 11:03:58 am
c.

176. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
3 June 2022 at 5:23:53 pm
Phil. 1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

God uses both of these circumstances to test and expose a leader's true character (and I think that the first of these is the most telling!). The apostle Paul continually appealed to his endurance of hardship and sufferings for Christ as one of the proofs of his apostolic call (Phil. 1:29-30). He also pointed out that some leaders should no longer be regarded as leaders - or even as true Christians.

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167 4. In **Philippians 3:18** how does Paul describe these *former* Christian leaders? How did Paul feel about them now?

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170 5. Based on **Philippians 3:19**, what was to be the ultimate outcome of their opposition to the gospel they had once preached?

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172 6. Match the reason for their apostasy ("walking away from Christ") with the phrase that Paul uses in **Philippians 3:19** -

a. "their god is their belly" b. "they glory in their shame" c. "with minds set on earthly things"
173 These apostates not only openly committed immorality, they may have actually claimed it was God's will to do so.

174 They did not show any self-restraint, in fact, they probably claimed that God's blessing and favour was evidenced by their luxurious lifestyles. Such lifestyles may led to their obesity.

175 These apostates only ever thought about their immediate and temporal comfort and ease.

The Reason to Endure

Paul reminds his readers that their trials and adversities were only temporary. He was certainly qualified to tell the Philippians this since he himself had endured much and even as he wrote this epistle he was in chains (Phil. 1:7). This should remind us that Christianity is not about having a trouble-free life.

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177. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:27:29 pm

Phil. 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

178. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:29:48 pm

That their citizenship was in Heaven, and that Christ would come from Heaven to judge the world and (vs 21) transform their bodies through the resurrection.

179. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:37:27 pm

Phil. 3:21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

180. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:39:40 pm

“All things” are now subject to the risen and glorified Christ.

This means that the future, including ours, is in the Lord’s hands. Therefore we can rest in this assurance.

181. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:45:50 pm

Phil. 4:1 ¶ Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

182. Dr. Andrew Corbett

3 June 2022 at 5:47:22 pm

Paul’s obvious affection for the Philippians is a challenge for all leaders today to genuinely care for those they shepherd.

177 7. What was Paul’s reminder to the Philippians in **Philippians 1:20** about, and how would this help them to change their perspective on their current hardships?

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The Philippians needed to know that despite the present difficulties, Christ was enthroned in Heaven and was reigning as Lord.

179 8. How much of this world is now subjected to Christ? (**Phil. 1:21**) What does this mean about the uncertainties of our future?

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181 9. How does **Philippians 4:1** create a challenge for church leaders to *feel* about those they lead and shepherd? And, how can we apply what Paul appeals for in this verse?

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Application Discussion

- What qualities are necessary for a Christian to be an example worth following?
- If you were friends with a church leader who confessed to you that they had sinned, what would you counsel them to do?
- If a fellow member of your church was struggling to pray, read God’s Word and attend church, how would you use Paul’s words to the Philippians at the end of chapter 3 to encourage them?
- How does Paul’s closing appeal challenge most Christians to reassess their life priorities?

Study 8

REJOICE IN THE LORD



Background

There is no perfect church. But of all Paul's epistles, most often occasioned by problems, his epistle to the Philippians was not occasioned by a problem. It was by far his most positive epistle. The mutual love between Paul and the Philippians is obvious in this epistle as evidenced by Paul's thankfulness for them and his encouragement for them to *rejoice*. As we have seen, the Philippian church was not immune from the threat of heretical teachers. But Paul was confident that they could withstand this threat. In the meantime, there was something he needed address that had been simmering with the potential to cause much damage. It seems that even *near* perfect churches still have something they need to work on.