

CONVERSATION GUIDE:

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to you to be a "citizen of heaven" while still living in this world? Does this dual citizenship affect your everyday decisions?
- Share about someone whose faith you've tried to imitate or who has been a spiritual example to you. What qualities did you admire in them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- **Read Philippians 3:15-16.** Paul acknowledges that believers might disagree on certain matters. What's the difference between issues we can disagree on and core Gospel truths that aren't negotiable?
- In Phil 3:17 Paul invites believers to "join in imitating me." What specific qualities or actions of Paul do you think he wanted the Philippians to imitate?
- Paul warns about "enemies of the cross" in verses 18-19. What are characteristics he identifies in these people, and where do you see these attitudes in today's culture or church?
- "Who am I imitating?" and "Could others imitate me?" How would you answer these questions honestly?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- Reflect on the influences in your life (people, media, activities). Make two lists: those that help you "press on toward the goal" and those that might be distracting you. What changes might you need to make based on these lists?

GROUP FOCUS:

- Discuss how you can help each other "stand firm" in the Lord together. How can you create a culture where we handle disagreements in a God-honoring way?
- Pray for each member of the group to stand firm in their faith, to focus on their heavenly citizenship, and to become the kind of example others can follow as they follow Christ.



WEEK 24 THE JOY OF MATURITY (PHILIPPIANS 3:15-4:1)

TODAY'S VERSES:

Philippians 3:12-4:1	Matthew 10:24-25
1 Corinthians 14:26	Philippians 1:15-17
Ephesians 1:17	Proverbs 13:20

JULY 13, 2025

WEEK 24

THE JOY OF MATURITY

Today we will see how Paul addresses the way believers should handle disagreements within the church, emphasizing that mature Christians seek God's guidance together through prayer when differences arise. Paul calls the Philippians to imitate his example and the examples of other faithful believers like Timothy and Epaphroditus, who embodied Christ-like humility and service. He warns against following "enemies of the cross" - those who claim to be Christians but reject the Gospel's true meaning, serving their own appetites, glorying in shameful things, and focusing solely on earthly matters.

How to Disagree – *and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you...* In Phil 3:15 Paul acknowledges some people in the Philippian church disagree with him. Paul's emphasis on unity suggests that it was not uncommon for the Philippians to have different opinions on various matters. Paul was not worried about the content of the Philippians' differences because they likely dealt with minor issues... but *he is* concerned that they manage these differences by turning to God for guidance.

A Call to Imitation – *join in imitating me...* We all tend to imitate someone or something. Paul will move past himself to say "*and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us*" — the "us" includes Timothy and Epaphroditus. They were ALL to follow the example of Jesus by not seeking their own interests but rather the interests of others. Imitating Paul would mean we need people in our life who love Jesus, understand the Gospel, and point to Jesus in life and words. Paul pushes us to ask:

1. **Who am I imitating?** Too often our heroes are not those who love Jesus, but people who are the opposite of Him.

2. **Could others imitate me?** Do you love Jesus in a way you wish others would? Every Christian needs to have examples in front of them; wise people will look for examples while misguided people think they have no need of good influences.

Don't Follow the Patterns of Pretenders – DA Carson believes pretenders are people who claim to love Jesus and yet oppose the reality of the Gospel. Paul warns us not to be drawn away by these people.

1. **"Their god is their stomach."** meaning they serve their appetites.
2. **"Their glory is in their shame."** They show off or brag about things for which they should be ashamed.
3. **"They are focused on earthly things."** They get excited about the temporary, not the eternal.

What should occupy our hearts the most—this life or eternal life with Jesus? How should we spend money in view of eternity?

Citizens of a Higher Kingdom –We live in what Christ has given—adoption into God's family as a result of the Gospel. We must cease being so preoccupied with the temporary that we get distracted from our hope...and inviting everyone in to that same hope. Set your minds/hearts on things above and know that the one who has already crossed the finish line will get us there as well.

Paul reminds believers that their true citizenship is in heaven, not in this world, and that they should eagerly await Christ's return when He will transform their lowly bodies to be like His glorious body.