

SECTION 1 SETTING UP THE COURSE

Getting Started	ii
Preparing the Talks	vii
Getting Feedback	xxxix

SECTION 2 TRAINING NOTES

Introducing Discipleship Explored	xliii
Before the Course	xliv
During the Course	xlvii
What Do I Do If...?	li
Introducing Philippians	lv
After the Course	lvii

SECTION 3 STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 1	Confident in Christ	3
WEEK 2	Living in Christ	9
WEEK 3	Standing Together in Christ	17
WEEK 4	Transformed by Christ	25
WEEK 5	Righteous in Christ	33
WEEK 6	Knowing Christ	41
WEEK 7	Rejoicing in Christ	49
WEEK 8	Content in Christ	57

SETTING UP THE COURSE

GETTING STARTED

Discipleship Explored takes you, and those in your care, on a journey into Philippians.

To help your course run smoothly, you will need to consider the following before the course begins:

WHERE WILL YOU MEET?

Try to find a place where you will be able to meet every week at the same time. The important thing is that the environment should help people relax so that they will be encouraged to discuss freely. Sharing a meal together will help with this.

It's ideal if your group can continue to meet in the same place they met for ***Christianity Explored***.

To meet in a room at your church can also work well, as it will help participants to feel comfortable in the church building.

WHEN WILL YOU MEET?

Once a week for eight weeks is the time required to complete the course.

When you meet will depend on the type of group you are running. Most people will opt for a mid-week evening, but the material works equally well with, for example, a morning group for young mums, a breakfast group for working people, or as an adult Sunday school.

The structure of each week is simple: a meal, a Bible study, a talk, and a group discussion. You should be able to complete this in 2 hours or less.

Below are the suggested timings for each component of the weekly meetings. You can make sessions shorter or longer depending on your circumstances.

Leaders' prayer meeting	15 minutes
Sharing a meal	25 minutes
Group Discussion 1	30 minutes
Talk	20 minutes
Group Discussion 2	30 minutes

HOW WILL YOU INVITE PEOPLE?

Advertise the course in your church bulletin and during the Sunday services. (One way to do this is by downloading the trailer from www.discipleshipexplored.com)

Explain that **Discipleship Explored** involves refreshments or a meal, a Bible study, a talk, a short discussion and plenty of opportunities to ask questions.

At the end of **Christianity Explored**, participants should be invited to join **Discipleship Explored**. The **Christianity Explored** leaders will know who from their group is ready to go on to **Discipleship Explored** and should be encouraging them to do so.

The beauty of studying Mark's Gospel in **Christianity Explored** is that participants should now be eager to explore another part of God's word. Not only that, but they will also be eager to maintain the friendships they have developed while on the course.

WHO WILL LEAD?

The main course leader will be responsible for delivering eight short talks on Philippians, as well as leading a group of their own through the Bible studies and discussion questions. (It is better for one person to deliver all the talks as this develops rapport and trust between the speaker and the participants.)

Ideally, you will have 2 leaders for every 6 participants. These leaders are responsible for guiding the studies and discussions.

In a mixed group, it is desirable to have both a male and a female leader so that they can deal with pastoral situations appropriately.

Leaders should be Christians who are able to teach, encourage discussion and care for participants. They should be able to teach the Bible faithfully and clearly, and handle pastoral situations with care and sensitivity.

Because THE WEEK AHEAD features studies from all over the Bible, leaders will need to have enough general biblical knowledge to help participants with the studies as necessary.

If possible, ask leaders from **Christianity Explored** to lead their participants through **Discipleship Explored** too. If that is not possible, encourage one of the **Christianity Explored** leaders to meet their group on the first week of **Discipleship Explored** and introduce the group to their new leaders.

WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

Sharing a meal together is a core component of **Discipleship Explored**.

Organize a team of people who are able to prepare and serve food each week. If it is impractical to serve a meal, provide light refreshments (coffee and cake, for example).

Everyone on the course – leaders and participants – will need a Bible. For the sake of clarity, it is important that everyone uses the same version. (The version used throughout the course material is the New International Version.)

If they do not already have one, participants should be given a Bible at the start of the course, preferably one they can take away with them so that they can complete THE WEEK AHEAD studies.

Make sure you have enough copies of the *Study Guide* so that every participant has their own copy, and don't forget pens.

SETTING UP THE COURSE PREPARING THE TALKS

After the meal and the Bible study the course leader delivers a short talk.

The talks work their way chronologically through Philipians.

WEEK 1	Philippians 1:1–11	Confident in Christ
WEEK 2	Philippians 1:12–26	Living in Christ
WEEK 3	Philippians 1:27 – 2:11	Standing Together in Christ
WEEK 4	Philippians 2:12–30	Transformed by Christ
WEEK 5	Philippians 3:1–9	Righteous in Christ
WEEK 6	Philippians 3:10 – 4:1	Knowing Christ
WEEK 7	Philippians 4:2–9	Rejoicing in Christ
WEEK 8	Philippians 4:10–23	Content in Christ

Each week, before the talk, ask one of the leaders to read the relevant passage out loud. Then the course leader should pray and begin the talk.

This section contains outlines of those talks. (In addition, the website www.discipleshipexplored.com contains audio recordings to help you prepare.)

The outlines give a general structure for the talk. They do not cover every aspect of the passage under discussion, but focus on aspects that are particularly relevant to new Christians. Please study the passage carefully, and make these talks your own by adding your own illustrations and observations. But remember also to keep them relatively short. We recommend 20 minutes as a maximum.

OUTLINE OF TALK 1

CONFIDENT IN CHRIST PHILIPPIANS 1:1–11

AIM

- To welcome people to the course.
- To explain the term “disciple”.
- To explain that our confidence as Christians comes from the certainty that God always finishes the work he starts. But, in the meantime, if we’re to maintain that confidence, we must aim to live lives that are “to the glory and praise of God” (verse 11).

INTRODUCTORY ILLUSTRATION

I was never much good at jigsaw puzzles. When you’re staring at this pile of 1000 pieces poured out on the table in front of you, where do you start? Well, apparently what you have to do is find the corner pieces; then you find the pieces with straight edges; then you put them together, so that you have a square frame into which you know everything else fits. You probably still have 874 pieces to fit – but, however confusing it seems, you know they’ll all fit into that square. The same is going to be true for the questions that we have as we start *Discipleship Explored*. Even if we have 874 questions we want to ask about God, there are some things that are already in place, as Paul makes clear here in chapter 1: we know that the Lord is sovereign and we know that God is working in us.

OPENING

- Paul wrote this letter to the Christians (“saints in Christ Jesus”) who lived at Philippi, which was the main city in Macedonia. This little group of believers were the first Europeans to respond to the good news about Jesus.

He went back to visit them several times after his first visit. But now Paul writes to them while under house arrest, probably in Rome, and he warns them about some serious dangers that could damage this community of young Christians.

- The theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is given away in his very first sentence: he describes himself and his colleague Timothy as “servants of Christ” (v1). Like the Philippians reading this letter for the first time 2000 years ago, we’re going to be exploring for ourselves exactly what it means to be “servants of Christ”. To be, in other words, a disciple.

1. TRUE DISCIPLES HAVE THEIR CONFIDENCE IN GOD

- When someone becomes a Christian, we sometimes say that they have made a decision for Christ, or that someone has committed their life to God. In other words, we think that becoming a Christian is something that we have done.
- Paul sees it differently. The truth is that if you have made a response to God, it is because God has done something in you.
- Paul was certain that God was working in the Philippians because of their “partnership in the gospel from the first day until now” (v5); because their lives have steadily demonstrated that the gospel has changed them. Their words, their actions, even their money (see 4:10, 15–16) had consistently revealed their love for Jesus Christ.
- And because he knew God was working in them, he could also be sure that God would complete the work he started in them (v6).

APPLICATION You may be feeling that since becoming a Christian you keep messing up and sometimes you may even wonder if you really are a Christian. The word “disciple” simply means “learner” – in other words, in the Christian life, we can never say that we have arrived – we will always be learning. Paul’s words give us great confidence: he is saying that if God has begun a good work in you, he will finish it.

- › *Add your own illustration here: a personal illustration of how others more readily saw the change in you than you did in yourself. Point out that the Holy Spirit, because he is holy makes us feel bad about the wrong things that we do – but being sensitized to sin, and feeling guilty is a sign that God is at work in us, not that God has abandoned us.*

2. TRUE DISCIPLES GROW IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

- Paul tells the Philippian Christians that he is praying that they would (v9) have deeper knowledge and insight.
- One of the effects of this growing knowledge of God (v10) is that “you may be able to discern what is best”. In other words, that Christians will be increasingly wise about how to live – and be able to distinguish good from bad.
- But knowledge and understanding are not an end in themselves. God does not want us to become merely experts in theology.
- Knowledge of God is something which gives rise to genuine, intelligent love in a Christian’s life: a love for God, for his people and for others.

APPLICATION Are we growing in our knowledge of God, so that we will be able to know what’s best in our Christian lives?

3. TRUE DISCIPLES ARE FRUITFUL

- In verse 10, Paul prays that these young Christians would be “pure” and “blameless”.
- Paul is saying that a true understanding of God will make us pure through and through.
- But where does this goodness come from? Again, it is not from ourselves. Verse 11 tells us that this “fruit of righteousness” comes from Jesus Christ, and that it brings glory and praise to God.

APPLICATION How “pure” are we? (Are we different on the inside than we are on the outside?) How “blameless” are we? (Do our lives make it easier or harder for other people to believe in Christ?)

CONCLUSION

Growing as a Christian – being a disciple – is something that comes from God, and for which God gets the glory.

Our confidence as Christians comes from the certainty that God always finishes the work he starts. But we are not to just sit around waiting for it to happen to us. The sign that God is at work in us is that we actively take steps to be disciples – to grow in the knowledge of God.

AT THE END OF THE TALK

- › *Using Paul’s prayer in this passage as a guide, pray for the group.*
- › *Introduce the questions in GROUP DISCUSSION 2.*