

REDEFINING NORMAL

"REDEFINING CHANGE"

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

This Week's Core Competency

Faithfulness – I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to that relationship. Proverbs 3:3, 4

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.*

*Then you will win favor and a good name
in the sight of God and man.*

The word "faithfulness" has a couple of different nuances. It sometimes means "steadfast in affection or allegiance," i.e., "loyal." It has this meaning with reference to a true friend or devoted spouse, and with reference to the creed, "I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term *loyalty* to that relationship." But it sometimes means "firm in adherence to promises or in the observance of duty," i.e., "conscientious." It has this meaning with reference to a dedicated employee or a staunch Christian. Faithfulness in this sense implies discipline, suggesting that a faithful Christian is a disciplined Christian. Serious Christ-followers incorporate into their lives those practices or spiritual disciplines—like the 10 Core Practices—that the Spirit uses to transform them to be more like Jesus.

This kind of talk always raises the question, "What about God's role in our spiritual growth? Isn't he the one responsible for our

***More than anything else in life I
want to know God.***

-Philip Yancey

transformation?" Consider this analogy, one that may already be familiar to you. Think of the difference between piloting a motorboat versus sailing a sailboat. You can pilot a motorboat all by yourself. All you have to do is start the engine. Once you do, you're in control. But sailing a sailboat is a different story. You can hoist the sails and grab the rudder, but you're utterly dependent on the wind to make your boat go. All you can do is do all you can to catch the wind.

Spiritual transformation is like sailing a sailboat. You open yourself to it through certain practices, but you cannot make it happen. When it does, you thank God for it. What's more, just as wise sailors know what to do to take advantage of the wind, so also wise Christians know what to do to take advantage of the Spirit. They creatively and wisely engage in those activities or disciplines they know the Spirit uses to transform them. They know to put up the sails and adjust them as needed. But they also know what happens is up to God.

This kind of talk always raises the objection, "I don't have the time or the energy to do anything more; I'm all disciplined out." Consider what one author has to say in this regard. "Certainly, there are some foundational practices, like prayer, solitude, and Scripture meditation that are critically important. But all of life's activities can become spiritual training exercise if you allow them to.

"Sitting in traffic congestion can become a training exercise in patience. Mundane activities like cleaning the house or taking a shower can train our hearts in gratitude, if we use those

con't pg 2

opportunities to thank God for his daily provisions. Delighting in nature or in wholesome pleasures can train our hearts in joy. Even sleep can be a spiritual discipline. Yes, you read that right! Disciplining ourselves to get a good night's sleep can train us away from anxiety and toward trust if we remind ourselves that the world is in God's hands and it will get along very well even though we're not awake to control everything.

"There is no need to divide life into times to 'be spiritual' and time to 'just do life.' Every moment is a chance to learn from Jesus how to live in the kingdom of God" (John Ortberg, Laurie Pederson, Judson Poling, *Growth: Training vs. Trying*, 17, 18).

For Discussion

John is a married guy troubled by the fact that he doesn't think he's growing spiritually. He thought he was for a while but thinks he's stalled spiritually. He and his wife attended the worship service for a couple of years before they got connected to community. Once they did, he started reading the Bible, contributing to the discussion in his community group Bible study, and doing life together with others in his home group. At first he sensed that he was growing. That sense peaked while he and Joan were home group leaders, but after a couple of years in that position, he doesn't have that sense any longer. His spiritual journey has become about as exciting as a drive across Kansas—no offense—but he doesn't know what to do about it.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Philippians 2:12-18

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

14 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (NIV, (c)1984)

Cf., NIV, (c)2010

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (differences underlined)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight Paul's personal references to himself and to the Philippians in vv. 12, 16-18.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 12.
- * Circle "work out" in v. 12.
- * Circle "salvation" in v. 12.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 13.
- * Circle "you" in v. 13.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 15.

- * Bracket "blameless and pure" in v. 15.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 15.
- * Circle "hold out" in v. 16.
- * Box "in order that" indicating *purpose* in v. 16.
- * Bracket "the day of Christ" in v. 16.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 17.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Explain the relationship of Paul's command, "continue to work out your salvation," to what he has previously said.
2. What *tone* does he take with his readers?
3. Put what his command means in your own words.
4. Believers are to obey the apostle's command "with fear and trembling." How come?
5. Describe God's role in our spiritual formation.
6. We are to "do everything" obedience involves "without complaining or arguing." What's the relationship of this command to Paul's first one?
7. We are to "do everything" obedience involves "without complaining or arguing." How come?
8. What's the goal of our formation?
9. And the "word of life" would be what?
10. Explain the *contrast* in verse 17.
11. **Discussion.** What does this passage have to do with faithfulness?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In *Renovation of the Heart* Dallas Willard writes, "Spiritual formation is something we human beings can and must undertake—as individuals and in fellowship with other apprentices of Jesus. While it is simultaneously a profound manifestation of God's gracious action through his Word and Spirit, it is also something we are responsible for before God and can set about achieving in a sensible, systematic manner" (25). Let's examine what he says in the light of Philippians 2:12-18.

To do that we'll follow the path of Paul's argument by noting the "bread crumbs" he drops along the way. The first one is "therefore" (v.12). What the apostle is about to say follows from what he has just said verses 5-11, which follows from what he had previously said in 1:27. There he told his readers "*conduct yourselves* in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" using a verb with political overtones to make a play on words. "The verb means (literally) to 'live as citizens.' By joining it with the adverb 'worthily,' Paul now uses the verb metaphorically, not meaning 'live as citizens of Rome'—although that is not irrelevant—but rather 'live in the Roman colony of Philippi as worthy citizens of your heavenly homeland'" (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, 162). Therefore, we are to live in this world as good citizens of heaven, which is what we are (3:20). In verses 5-11 he told his readers that Christ "became obedient to death" and so "God exalted him" and designated him "Lord." Therefore, just as Christ Jesus obeyed, so should we! As he is now Lord, so should we now live under his rule! And so Paul goes on to say, "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Working *out* our salvation isn't working *for* our salvation—salvation is the gift of God (Eph 2:8). Neither is it working *on* our salvation—salvation is complete the moment we believe. Working *out* our salvation is *living out* our new life in Christ. It's working deliberately to grow spiritually until we're conformed to the likeness of God's Son (Ro 8:29).

The next one is "for." Paul goes on to explain why

he said "work out your salvation *with fear and trembling*"—because God is simultaneously at work in us. Knowing that our working is done in the presence of God working in us is a cause for reverence and awe. Spiritual formation is God's work but it involves our faithful participation.

Put differently, the Spirit uses things we do to transform us. While we may not be able to be like Jesus by "trying hard," we can by "training wisely." "Training is essential for almost any significant endeavor in life—running a marathon, becoming a surgeon, learning how to play the piano. The need for preparation or training does not stop when it come to learning the art of forgiveness, joy, or courage. It applies to a vibrant spiritual life just as it does to other activities. Learning to think, feel, and act like Jesus is at least as demanding as learning to run a marathon or play the piano. To follow Jesus means learning to arrange my life around those practices that will enable me to stay connected to him and live more and more like him. In short, this is just another way of defining a spiritual discipline. A spiritual discipline is any activity that can help me gain power to live life as Jesus taught and modeled it" (John Ortberg, et.al., 16). Spiritual disciples, like the Ten Core Practices, are things we do that the Spirit uses to transform us; they are things we do to "work out" our salvation.

The next one is "so that." Then he describes the purpose behind our efforts. We work at growing spiritually so that we may demonstrate holiness in a profoundly profane world. What's more, we work "without complaining or arguing," which suggests that our efforts to mature take place in community with others. And so together with them we shine like stars in the midnight sky as we live out and hold out the life-giving gospel of Christ.

The last one is "in order that." When Christ returns, we will all stand before him at his judgment seat to receive our rewards (2 Co 5:10). That's when the Pauls in our lives will know that they did not invest in us for naught.

The Message of this Passage

Work deliberately, personally and with others in community, at growing spiritually knowing that God is the one who gives you the desire and works in you to become like Christ.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Everyday moments can be spiritual training moments. Talk about how to take spiritual advantage of the following situations (John Ortberg, et. al., 19):

1. You're in the "under ten items" checkout line behind someone who is either rude or mathematically challenged, and you're getting frustrated.
2. Someone offends you with a hurtful comment. You are just on the edge of hurting them back with a cutting remark.
3. You're on the verge of procrastinating (again) with a project you dislike.
4. You're grumbling through daily chores—laundry, shopping, housecleaning, tasks at work.
5. In the middle of a pressured day you encounter someone in need.

“Redefining Change”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 12 **Therefore** What Paul is about to say follows from what he has said in verses 5-11 or from what he has said beginning in 1:27. Favoring the first view Martin writes, "The two main emphases of the hymn to Christ in the preceding verses were his obedience (2:8; cf. Heb. 5:8) and his receiving the title of Lord (v. 11; cf. Rom. 14:9). Both aspects of his 'way' likened to an odyssey from one eternity to another are now applied to the Philippians' situation, and *therefore* is the connecting link between the story and the application. As he obeyed, so should you! As he is now Lord, so live under his rule!" (Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, TNTC, 114). Favoring the second view Fee writes, "The 'so then' with which this sentence begins indicates that he is about to apply the appeal of 1:27-2:5, now by way of vv. 6-11, to the case specific situation of the believing *community* in Philippi" (Fee, 231-32).

v. 12 **obeyed** The Philippians always obeyed, but whom? Some take it that Paul is referring to their past obedience to him. "He knows that the Philippians were obedient to him as God's messenger during his stay (Acts 16). In fact, it was their obedience to the gospel (cf. Acts 16:15, 33) which, on its human side, first brought the church into being. Paul often reminds his readers of their initial obedience to the gospel's call and claim (e.g. Rom. 6:17; 16:19) and expects a continuing obedience to his apostolic directives (e.g. 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:6; 2 Thes. 3:4; Phm. 21) (Martin, 114-15; cf. TEV, NLT). Others take it that Paul is referring to their past obedience to God. "Even if this be so, the thought must involve the commands of God as taught them by Paul. It may be better, therefore, to explain the thought directly as obedience to the commands of God, with Paul involved only secondarily" (Homer A. Kent, Jr. "Philippians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:128). "As his letter to the Romans makes clear, for Paul *faith in Christ* is ultimately expressed as *obedience to Christ*, not in the sense of following the rules, but of coming totally under his lordship, of being devoted completely to him. This is the only 'obedience' to his own words that Paul cares anything about. That this is the sense here seems certain, since it follows so closely the twofold reminder of Christ's own obedience that led to the cross and of his present status as Lord of all" (Fee, 233).

v. 12 **not only . . .** Paul's point is not that they were obedient in his presence and are even more obedient now in his absence. The phrase between the dashes in the NIV goes with the verb "work out" that follows. His words combine the twofold nuance "don't work out your salvation just because I am present" and "don't work out your salvation only when I am present" (see J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 116). Cf. "So, my dear friends, you have always been obedient; your obedience must not be limited to times when I am present. Now that I am absent it must be more in evidence, so work out your salvation in fear and trembling" (NJB).

v. 12 **work out** Working *out* salvation is not working *for* salvation but making salvation operative—something they must do themselves (cf. "your own salvation," NKJV). "The believer is called to self-activity, to the active pursuit of the will of God, to the promotion of the spiritual life in himself, to the realization of the virtues of the Christian life, and to a personal application of salvation. He must 'work out' what God in His grace has 'worked in'" (91). The command is both individual and corporate. "A great deal of unnecessary ink has been spilt over this passage, as to whether 'salvation' has to do with the individual believer or with the corporate life of the community. But that is a false dichotomy . . . it is an ethical text, dealing with 'how saved people live out their salvation' in the context of the believing community and the world" (Fee, 234-35).

v. 13 **fear and . . .** Believers are to work out their salvation "with fear and trembling" because they are to recognize that *it is God* [emphatic] who works in them (cf. 1:6). "Paul's use of the terms in other contexts refers to 'awe and reverence in the presence of God' (P. T. O'Brien, *Philippians*, NIGTC, 284 italics added). And so, believers must not take a cavalier attitude toward their formation. "Paul presented both the work of God ('works in') and the work of the individual Christian ('work out'). Paul recognized the place of each. Divine imitative called for a human response. While he believed that, ultimately, all of salvation, considered in its broadest scope, depended on God's initiative and power, he never tolerated passive Christianity. Human energy could never accomplish the work of God, yet God did not accomplish his purposes without it. The two functioned in perfect harmony, and people cooperated with and contributed to what God did in them and in the world" (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 111).

v. 16 **hold out** The verb can mean either "to hold fast or firmly" (cf., NIV, (c)2010) or "to hold out or offer" (cf., NIV, (c)1984). "Those who regard the preceding clause as parenthetical explain what follows as in contrast to the 'crooked and depraved generation' and so adopt the meaning 'holding fast the word of life.' On the other hand, the figure of 'stars' supports the idea of 'holding out' or 'holding forth,' and there is no real reason to treat it as a parenthesis. Furthermore, this latter sense assumes the former, for those who hold out the word of life to others are understood to have first received it themselves" (Kent, 129).

v. 16 **day of Christ** See 1:6; 2:16. A reference to the time when Christ returns for his church and believers' works are judged and rewarded (cf., 2Co 5:10).

v. 17 **drink offering** See Ex 29:38-41; cf. Nu 15. If Paul's present situation led to a martyr's death, his life would be poured out like a drink offering accompanying the sacrificial service of the Philippians.

Connect the **FAMILY**. During this series, Bible stories appropriate for children will be used that complement the adult teaching.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Do people who want to become more like Jesus need to use their mind (thinking), their heart (trusting) or their hands (doing)? Read Luke 13:10-17 to find the answer. It really takes all three! Too bad, the synagogue teachers had a lot of knowledge about the Bible, but they did not trust Jesus or do good things for others. You can BECOME more like Jesus by thinking, trusting and doing!

Pray it!

As a parent you can teach your child to pray by using actual scriptures as a guide. Pray this scripture with them this week..

Father, help love and faithfulness to never leave me; I will bind them around my neck and write them on my heart. Then I will win favor and a good name in the sight of You and people. Pr 3:3-4

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Faithfulness – Sticking with God, no matter what, makes me a winner

Memory verse – "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."
Jn 12:46

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- *What caused the women to be crippled?
- *What did Jesus do that made the synagogue leader upset?
- *Why did Jesus say it was OK to heal on the Sabbath?
- *What was Jesus trying to teach the people through healing the woman?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Congratulations! If you are doing *The Scrolls*, then you are on your way to BECOMING more like Jesus. *The Scrolls* is a tool to help kids and their parents read and understand the Bible together. As you begin 2011, set a goal with other friends and their families of completing *The Scrolls* for eight straight weeks. Plan a party at the end of the eight weeks to celebrate how good it is to become like Jesus!

Kids K through fourth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.



Family completes **Experience It** _____
 Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____
 Family participates in **Live It** _____ and **Pray It** _____
 Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Child's name _____

Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.