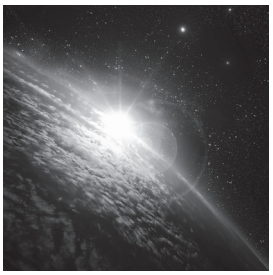
SESSION 7
LEAD IT: COLLEGE AGE



STUDY NOTE

Like your Prep It for Session 7, this session is divided into four segments. For time consideration, you may want to choose one of the "segment options" below. Each segment contains a "Digging In" exercise, a "Taking It Inward" exercise, and an application activity. Note that each segment has its own corresponding student pages.

SEGMENT OPTIONS:

- Segments can be divided up by small groups or partners. Each group should do its own digging and reflecting and "report" back to the whole group in an effort to teach the rest of the group what they discovered about their passage of Scripture.
- Divide this session into two group sessions, covering two segments per session
- Ask your group which segments they'd like to tackle.

GOALS

As students experience Philippians 3, they will:

- gain insight into what it means to *know* Christ, not simply *know* about Him.

MATERIALS: Group

- Whiteboard
- Additional materials needed for each of the four segments:

1. Knowing Christ
- The "Appointment with Christ" handout (located in the Student Section)

2. Knowing the Power of Jesus' Resurrection
- Blank note cards (4" x 6") or encouragement cards

3. Sharing in Christ's Suffering
- A piece of poster board, masking tape, and markers for every six students

4. Becoming Like Christ in His Death
- Slips of paper (1" x 2") for each student and either:

  a. a candle and an aluminum pie plate.

  b. or a small cross (made out of 2" x 4"s) and push-pin thumb tacks.

  c. or a trash can (the easiest option).

- Optional: A prize for the student who correctly answers the "Bonus" review question.

MATERIALS: Each Student

- A Bible
- A pen
- Student pages for Session 7 that correspond with the four segments
- Scripture sheet for Philippians 3

SESSION INTRO

Prayer

After the group has gathered, help them focus their hearts and minds on God in prayer. Welcome the Lord's presence and ask Him to give your group members the grace to respond to His conviction.

Review

Help your students stay connected to the big themes of Philippians by asking them:

> **What did Paul consider his past accomplishments to be in comparison to gaining Christ?**
>
> **What were some words Paul used to describe how he was pursuing a relationship with Christ?**
>
> **Bonus question: What tribe of Israel was Paul from?**

Open

Ask your group to brainstorm on this question:

> **What are some things people hope to get out of a relationship with Christ?**
> *Let the discussion be open-ended here. Possible answers include love, forgiveness, acceptance, peace, eternal life—and, if they're honest, perhaps things like "a husband or wife," "money," "success" and "a good life."*

Tell the group that in Philippians 3, Paul shared what he desired out of a relationship with Christ. Ask them to find this by reading Philippians 3:10–11 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, they should mark the four desires Paul mentioned. Then ask the students to tell you what they found. Record on the board the four desires as they write them in the spaces provided on their journal pages. Be sure that you end up with this list:

> **1. To know Christ**
> **2. To know the power of His resurrection**
> **3. To know the fellowship of sharing in His suffering**
> **4. To become like Christ in His death**

At this point, proceed with the option you've chosen for addressing these four desires, the four segments of this session. Then pick up with the part of the Group Guide that covers the points you've chosen.

DIGGING IN—#1 KNOWING CHRIST

Set the stage for this segment by asking the group:

> **Is there a difference between knowing Jesus and knowing *about* Jesus?**
> **What would you say that difference is?**

Now ask students to read the passages on the following page using their Bibles. The verse references are also printed on their journal pages. As they read, they should pay attention to the difference between *knowing* Christ and simply *knowing about* Christ by looking for words like "know," "remain," and "abide." There is space on their journal pages for them to take notes on what they learn.

You may want to invite your group members to find a place of solitude (a corner of the room, hallway, or an empty room nearby) to get alone with God and listen to what He has to say. As they do, the charts on their journal pages will begin to look something like this:

	What do you learn about knowing (or NOT knowing) Christ?
Matthew 7:15–23	***If we don't know Christ:*** *-Jesus will say He didn't know us.* *-we can still do great things, but they don't count eternally.* *-we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.* ***If we do know Christ:*** *-we'll do the will of the Father.* *-we can enter the kingdom.*
John 15:1–11	***If we don't know (remain in or abide in) Christ:*** *-we can't bear fruit.* *-we wither up (spiritually).* *-we're thrown away as branches.* ***If we do know (remain in or abide in) Christ:*** *-we will bear much fruit.* *-we can ask and will receive.* *-we will show ourselves to be His disciples.* *-this will bring glory to God.* *-this will give us complete joy.*
1 John 5:20	***If we don't know Christ:*** *-we will not know truth.* ***If we do know Christ:*** *-we may know Him who is true.* *-He gives us understanding.*

TAKING IT INWARD

Now reassemble the group. Then briefly discuss the passages, prompting the discussion with these questions:

Based on what you just read, what will happen to us if we cruise through life without truly knowing Christ? Did that alarm anyone? Why?

On the flip side, what do we gain if we know Him?

If you're wanting to have a fruitful life, what should be your first priority according to John 15?

Note: The NIV uses the words "remain in me," but a more accurate word here is "abide" (NASB, ESV). The word "abide" connotes that we're to dwell in Him, make ourselves at home with Him, and spend quality time with Him.

Which word better describes your relationship with Christ lately: "Activities" or "Intimacy"? Why?

When you have your quiet time, what do you typically spend time doing—hearing straight from Jesus (i.e., the Bible) or reading what someone else heard from Jesus? Which do you think is better? Why?

Hand out the page entitled "Appointment with Christ." Ask the group members to fill in the calendar for the next week as best they can, filling in the time designated for school, work, practices, and so on.

Then ask them to carve out at least one block of time—an hour or more—when they can spend time simply getting to know Christ. Suggest that they use the time to "read the red" (Jesus' words) from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John (John 14–17 is a great passage) and listen to what He's saying to them. Encourage them to journal their thoughts as they spend time with Jesus. The group may even want to set up a phone network to help keep one another accountable to their appointments with Jesus.

DIGGING IN—#2 KNOWING THE POWER OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

To set the stage for this segment, ask the group:

What comes to mind when you think of God's power?
Possible answers include creation, the size of the universe, natural disasters, thunder and lightning.

What event in the Bible do you think best displayed God's power? Why?

Has it ever occurred to you that if you're a Christian, the same power that made the universe—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead—lives inside of you?

The following Scripture references are printed on the students' journal pages. Ask the group members to read them and make notes on any connection they see between God's power, Jesus' resurrection, and us. Challenge them to be as detailed as possible! You may want to have them scatter to different parts of the room to get alone with God for this exercise. The chart on their journals will begin to look something like this, though less detailed:

	God's Power, Jesus' Resurrection, and Us
1 Corinthians 6:14	*-God's power raised Jesus from the dead.* *-This power will also raise us.*
Ephesians 1:18–23	*-Paul is praying that we would know God's power.* *-This power is described as incomparably great.* *-There's nothing like it.* *-This power is for us who believe.* *-It's the same mighty strength that raised Jesus up from the dead.* *-It also seated Jesus up in the heavenly realms, above everything else.* *-Christ is the head over every other power.* *-We've been given fullness in Christ (i.e., everything Christ has).*
Colossians 2:9–14	*-We have been raised with Christ through faith in the power of God.* *-God made us alive with Christ! (We used to be "dead.")* *-God has given us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* *-God has given us a new birth into an inheritance that can never fade.*
1 Peter 1:3–5	*-We are shielded by God's power through faith.*

TAKING IT INWARD

When most have finished, call the group back together. Ask the students to look at what they've written on their journal pages and circle one or two things that stand out to them. Then ask for volunteers to share what they circled and why. Prompt the discussion with these questions:

How would you describe the connection between God's power, Jesus' resurrection, and us?

Does it change you in any way to know that the power of Jesus' resurrection is in you? How?

How can this knowledge help you when you feel depressed? Face temptations? Are going through tough circumstances or unfair treatment because of your faith?

Ask the group members to do the exercise entitled "Putting Truth to Work," which is printed on their journal pages. (The instructions appear below for your reference.) For this exercise, you'll want to hand out encouragement post cards (or blank note cards) for your students to send to family members or friends.

Putting Truth to Work

Is there someone in your life who's depressed? Do you have a friend who has made a life-changing mistake? Is someone close to you experiencing challenging circumstances (with their health, their family, or a relationship)? Take a minute to write a note to that friend. In your own words, encourage them with the truth you just uncovered in Scripture. Be sure to tell them about the connection between God's power, Jesus' resurrection, and them.

DIGGING IN—#3 SHARING IN CHRIST'S SUFFERING

To set the stage for this segment, ask the group to think about—then answer— this question:

> **When does a friend truly become a friend?**
> *There's no right answer here, but you'll eventually want to elicit the fact that many times it's when you go through a crisis or difficult situation with someone. You may have a good example of this from your own life—or you can ask the group for an example or two.*

Tell the group that it's the same way in our walk with Christ. When we experience difficult circumstances it's easy to forget the fact that Jesus suffered through trying times as well. Therefore, as we join our suffering with Jesus' suffering, we will be drawn closer to Him and experience a depth that we may not have experienced had we not had the trying circumstances.

Ask your students to move to a place of solitude to read the following set of passages and to keep their hearts open to what God wants to teach them. As they read the Scriptures, they should journal everything they learn about our suffering and Jesus' suffering. Their charts should begin to look something like the one below, though don't worry if it's not as detailed.

	Jesus' Suffering and Trials	**Our Suffering and Trials**
2 Corinthians 1:3–5	*-Christ suffered.* *-His sufferings flow over into ours.*	*-God comforts us in all our troubles.* *-His comfort also overflows into our lives.* *-We suffer and are comforted so that we can comfort others.*
Romans 8:17–18	*-Jesus' suffering led to His glory.*	*-If we share in Jesus' suffering, we also share in His glory.* *-Our present sufferings can't be compared with our future glory.*
Matthew 10:38–39		*-Just like Jesus, we're called to "take up our cross."* *-If we lose our life for His sake, we will find life!* *-Because Jesus suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help us when we're tempted.* *-We're to consider it pure joy when we face trials.* *-Trials produce perseverance.* *-We have infirmities and sorrows, but Jesus takes them.* *-By Jesus' wounds we are healed.*

Hebrews 2:9–18	*-Because Jesus suffered death, He was crowned with glory and honor.* *-Jesus was made perfect through suffering.* *-Jesus' death destroyed the enemy's power over death.*	*-Because Jesus suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help us when we're tempted.*
James 1:2–3		*-We're to consider it pure joy when we face trials.* *-Trials produce perseverance.*
Isaiah 53:1–7 (Isaiah's prophecy of the coming Messiah)	*-Jesus was despised and rejected.* *-He was a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering.* *-He was despised, we did not esteem Him.* *-He took up our infirmities and sorrows.* *-He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our sins.* *-He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He was a silent lamb.*	*-We have infirmities and sorrows, but Jesus takes them.* *-By Jesus' wounds we are healed.*

TAKING IT INWARD

When most have finished, call the group back together. Help students process the information they found by discussing the following questions as a group.

What are some things that are causing people to "suffer" today— specifically, you and those you know?
How do people typically react to God when these things happen?
-They get mad at Him.
-They ask "why?"
-Some walk away from God.

In the passages you just looked at, what is God telling us to do when we suffer?
-Compare our suffering to Jesus' suffering.
-Realize there's a purpose in it (to comfort others).
-Consider it joy because it's teaching us to persevere.
-Persevere (hang in there).

What does God promise will happen if we "hang in there"?
-We will receive comfort and salvation.
-We will be made complete.
-We will share in Jesus' glory!

Can you draw any conclusions about the purpose of suffering?
-It can draw us closer to Jesus.
-It will produce patience and perseverance.
-It can make us more like Jesus.

Now break into small groups of five or six students. Give a sheet of poster board and a set of markers to each group. Remind the students of the question you asked earlier:

When does a friend truly become a friend?

Thinking of that question, ask each student to write a prayer on the poster board, thanking Jesus for sharing in their sufferings and telling Him of their willingness to share in His. If they're suffering right now, they can write about this experience, asking Jesus to help with this situation. Each poster board will become a big "collage of prayer" that can be mounted on the wall.

DIGGING IN—#4 BECOMING LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH

Why in the world would Paul have said that he wanted to be like Jesus "in His death"? Doesn't that sound pretty weird? Paul wasn't being morbid here. But your group members will have to search the Scriptures to find out what he was really saying.

Have group members look up the following Scriptures in their Bibles. (These are printed on their journal pages.) As they read, ask them to note what they learn about what Jesus was like in his death. Encourage them to be as detailed as possible. Here's what they should come up with:

	What Was Jesus Like in His Death?
Philippians 2:5–11	*-He was humble and obedient.* *-He submitted Himself to death—even on a cross.*
Matthew 26:39	*-Jesus prayed that the cup (of death and suffering) would be taken away from Him. He didn't like it!* *-BUT He said, "Not as I will, but as you will" to God.*
John 10:17–18	*-Jesus was willing to lay down His life for us.* *-He laid it down of His own accord (nobody forced Him).* *-The Father loved Him for this.*

TAKING IT INWARD

After a few minutes, call your group together and discuss these questions:

Based on these verses, what was Jesus like in His death?
-obedient
-submissive
-humble
-willing

Does this surprise you? If you were in Jesus' position—with all His power and authority—how do you think you would have acted?

When Paul said he wanted to become like Jesus in His death, what do you think he was saying?

The next question is: **"Do you feel the same way Paul did? Do you want to become like Jesus was in His death—humble, willing, submissive and obedient to God?"** Ask students this question, giving them time to think about their answers. Then give a blank slip of paper to each student. Ask them to write their responses to these questions on the slip of paper. Then ask them to think about what it will take to get there. Give the Holy Spirit time to speak to them about any sins, temptations, selfishness, or impurity—or any way in which they're holding out a part of their lives from Him. They should write these on their slips of paper as well.
After a couple of minutes, conclude this segment with one of the following options:

a. Put a candle on an aluminum pie plate. Place this in the center of the group. As the students are ready, they should bring their slips of paper to the candle one by one. As they watch the papers burn, the students may want to share their thoughts.

b. Before the session, make a simple cross out of 2"x 4"s. Have the students "nail" (with push-pins) their slips of paper to the cross. Let the group decide what to do with the cross once all the slips of paper are attached.

c. The easiest option: Place a trash can in the center of the group. As the students share about their commitments, they can simply tear their slips of paper and put them in the trash can.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Before you close, ask the group to think of the most meaningful thing they learned about Jesus in this session. Have them write this in the space under "What I Learned about Following Christ."