

GROWING IN THE HABITS OF A DISCIPLE

“... walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God ”
- Colossians 1:10 (CSB)

“Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time ... ”
- Ephesians 5:15–16 (CSB)

These are uncertain and challenging times. It feels as if our very world has turned upside down. Yet, even in the midst of this, we know that our mission as a church has not changed: **Following the Holy Spirit, we exist to create a movement of disciple-making disciples, in RDU and around the world.**

As we love and care for each other, our city, and our world, we know God has called us to grow as disciple-making disciples and deepen our dependence on him. As we say often around here, “The gospel is not just the diving board; it’s the pool.” We believe God is at work in this season in many ways, but we know one of them is for us to go deeper into that pool. We want to use this time well. We don’t want to waste this moment; rather, we want to trust that God will redeem it.

God wants each of us to increase in our knowledge of him, even in this season. In light of this call, we want to take five weeks and focus our church family in growing deeper in essential habits of being a disciple of Jesus. For five weeks, we will focus on five essential habits for disciples of Jesus. We will discuss them in our small groups, challenge each other to grow in them, and provide resources for those that are led to dig even deeper.

Visit summitchurch.com for our weekly Growing in the Habits of a Disciple guide.

Week Four: The Habit of Serving Others

We cannot truly follow Jesus and ignore his example of serving others. Jesus announced that he did not come to earth to be served but to serve others (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Jesus taught his followers in word and in deed to fervently love others—across cultural, ethnic, and economic lines—in

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ways that can only be described as radical, unconditional, and generous (Luke 5:27–32; 10:25–37; 15:1–32; 19:1–10; John 4:1–45). Jesus summarized the Law and the Prophets as loving God *and* loving others with actions, as well as words (Matthew 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–37). Even on the very night he was betrayed, Jesus chose to begin the Feast of the Passover by washing the feet of his closest disciples (John 13:1–20). Part of learning to follow Jesus and abide in Christ means allowing him to transform our hearts and minds to think less of our own needs and more of the needs of others. But this kind of transformation does not happen overnight. This week’s discussion will give us a fresh look at Christ’s humble, others-focused posture and will encourage us to take practical steps to serve others in our community.

Our Next Step

Each week’s study will lead us to one outcome, one habit, to develop as disciples of Jesus. To cultivate a habit of serving others, our next step is to *practice serving others by choosing one tangible way to serve someone in your household, neighborhood, or community each day this next week.*

Before Your Small Group Meeting

- Listen to the weekend message from May 11/12.
- Read Philippians 2:1–11.
- If your small group is larger than ten people, be ready to split up into smaller discussion groups for the “Share Our Next Step” section of the guide.

Questions for Group Reflection and Discussion

Ask your group to open their Bibles and invite them to open up any sermon notes from the weekend message. Pray together and ask God to speak to your group by the power of his Spirit and through his Word as you discuss the following questions.

Discuss the Weekend Message

1. Peter describes Christians as “exiles” (1 Peter 1:1). The weekend message explained the difference between immigrants, tourists, and exiles. Explain the difference between these three types of people and what it means for Christians to live as exiles.

- *Leaders*, don’t spend too much time on this question!

- Immigrants seek to make the new country their permanent home. Christians who live like immigrants develop deep attachments to the world around them, often obsessing over material possessions, careers, reputations, and the pleasures of this world.
- Tourists are the opposite of immigrants. Tourists want to move through the new country quickly; the last thing they want is to make their journey permanent. Christians who live like tourists show little to no interest in their community, the world around them, or the people they could influence for God's glory.
- The word "exiles" is a vivid word picture for how we should live as Christians in the present age. Exiles are those who, for whatever reason, are striving to make a new home away from their country of origin. They see their true and preferred "home" as their country of origin, but they also accept their present reality for what it is—they must live in this new location for a certain, often unknown, period of time. Christians are called to live like exiles, making the most of the time and opportunities that we have here but also realizing that this present life is not our "true home." We will spend eternity with God in the new heavens and the new earth.

Read Philippians 2:1–11

The key to living with a Christian mindset is not in thinking less of ourselves but in thinking of ourselves less.¹ The gospel frees us from the traps of being self-absorbed, and with that freedom we can truly serve others. Philippians 2 shows us that Jesus himself had this others-focused mindset when he went to the cross (2:5, 8). The moment he laid down his life to serve others was also the moment of his greatest victory (2:9–11). And this is the example that Jesus calls us to follow as well. Jesus shockingly knelt to wash the very feet of his disciples at the Last Supper, and he instructed that all of his followers "ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14–15). Later that night, he said that the world will know we are Christians if we love each other in the same way that Christ loved and served us (John 13:34–35). It is this servant mindset of Jesus that Paul commands us to adopt in Philippians 2:5.

Such instructions, however, stand in contrast to the world around us. Especially in the midst of a global pandemic, many of us are drawn toward self-preservation and are tempted to give less attention to the needs of others. But Christianity consistently challenges us: Can we as Christians truly practice "self-care" without also considering the needs of others? After all, caring for others is an essential part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. We will never experience genuine freedom and the fruitful life of spiritual health that Jesus offers us in the gospel if we are not serving others. Jesus lived, and

¹ Tim Keller explores this idea, with evidence from Philippians 2:1–11, in *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness: The Path to True Christian Joy*.

died, as a servant to others and to God (2:7). Philippians 2 reminds us that such a lifestyle fuels the unity, love, and joy that characterize true Christian fellowship (2:1–4).

Discuss Philippians 2:1–11

2. What do we learn about Christ from Philippians 2:1–11?

3. What does Philippians 2:1–11 say to us or about us as Christ's followers?

Share Our Next Step

This week, we are asking every group member to commit to practicing our next step together:

Practice serving others by choosing one tangible way to serve someone in your household, neighborhood, or community each day this week.

If your small group is larger than ten people, consider dividing your small group into smaller groups of four to six people for more focused discussion in an environment where everyone can have an opportunity to share.

- Some platforms like Zoom Pro feature ways to break your call into smaller sections.
- You could also choose to wrap up the larger call together and spend the remainder of your group time on separate calls in your smaller groups of two to four, including prayer time!

Remember, we want everyone to *practice serving others by choosing one tangible way to serve someone in your household, neighborhood, or community each day this next week*. The questions below are intended to help each group member **cultivate the habit of serving others by brainstorming ideas for acts of service in their everyday lives**.

After you establish your smaller groups of four to six, ask each other the following questions and give everyone an opportunity to share:

4. What does it look like for us to be others-focused or servant-minded in our everyday lives? Share at least one or two specific applications for your context. *[Examples might include: serving the underprivileged or those most affected by COVID-19, serving others in our specific neighborhoods, or even serving others in our own household, such as roommates or specific family members.]*

5. What are some of the obstacles that we face as we try to live as servants to one another? What can we do to anticipate and overcome these obstacles?

Dig Deeper

God is calling each of us to grow in our knowledge of him. If one tangible example of serving others each day this next week is not a challenge for you, check out the “Dig Deeper” section on serving others in our “Growing in the Habits of a Disciple” guide at summitchurch.com. We also invite everyone to join in serving our community by participating in Blood Drives at the Summit on May 9 and May 16. For details, visit summitchurch.com.

Respond in Prayer

If you split your small group up into smaller groups, bring all of the smaller breakout groups back into one group for prayer time. Invite everyone in your group to keep their Bibles open to Philippians 2:1–11. Ask someone in your group to read the passage out loud. Then, move through the following prayer prompts.

Adoration: Ask three people to voice brief prayers of adoration to God based on what we learn about his character in Philippians 2:1–11.

- Praise God, the Father, for sending his Son to bring us into his family (2:10–11).
- Praise the Holy Spirit for being our great unifier (2:1).
- Praise the Son as the one whom God the Father exalted and who has dominion over heaven and earth (2:9–11).

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Confession: As a group, enter into a time of silent confession to God. Identify one prayer leader to read the following prompts out loud. The prayer leader should give group members 30–45 seconds to pray silently after each prompt before moving on to the next one.

- Confess to God the ways you have not had a servant mindset with your roommates, your family, or others in your community (2:4–5).
- Confess to God where you have been focused on your selfish ambition rather than on loving others through acts of service (2:3).
- Confess to God where you have tried to follow some other pattern for your life rather than Christ's example of servanthood (2:5–6).

Thanksgiving: Invite two people to offer prayers of thanksgiving to God. Use examples from your life or pray through what Jesus has done for us in the gospel, according to Philippians 2:1–11.

- Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins (2:8).
- Thank Jesus for coming to earth, for suffering on our behalf, and for serving us (2:6–8).
- Thank Jesus for living the perfect life and providing the example that we should live by (2:3–6).

Supplication: As a group, ask God to give you a servant's heart using the following prompts from Philippians 2. Consider asking four people in your group to pray brief prayers, assigning each person to pray for one of the following prompts.

- Ask God to give your Christian community a unity that is supernatural, that only the Holy Spirit could grant (2:1–2).
- Ask God to give you Christ's mindset as you interact with others, especially roommates or family (2:5).
- Ask God for the ability to see ways that you can serve your friends and neighbors (2:3–4).
- Ask that God would make our church a place that gives comfort, sympathy, encouragement, and support to those who need it (2:1–2).