

Transformed in Christ

To recognise that following Jesus is a lifelong journey of transformation. Because Christ has already taken hold of us, we can press on towards becoming more like Him, leave the past behind, and encourage one another along the way.

1. Welcome and opening reflection

Imagine standing at the start line of a 10k race. You feel enthusiastic, full of energy and confident that you can finish. But halfway round, the weather turns, your legs ache, and the final kilometre is all uphill.

Following Jesus can feel a bit like that. We start with enthusiasm, but as time goes on, we encounter challenges, struggle with old habits, and sometimes wonder whether we are making any progress.

Paul had been following Jesus for years, yet he was clear that he hadn't arrived. He was still growing, still learning, and still pressing on.

Opening question:

- What do you think makes it difficult for people to keep going when something becomes hard, whether that's running a race, learning a skill, or following Jesus?

2. Read the passage

Read Philippians 3:12-21 together.

Ask the group to listen for three things:

- What does Paul say about where he is in his journey?
- What motivates him to keep going?
- What does he say about where he ultimately belongs and where he is heading?

3. Not there yet, but pressing on

Focus on verses 12-16 again.

Paul has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Once he persecuted Christians; now he is devoted to following Jesus and sharing the good news. Yet, even after years of ministry, he refuses to claim that he has reached perfection.

He holds two truths together: he hasn't arrived, but he isn't giving up.

Discuss together



Why do you think Paul is so open about the fact that he hasn't yet reached his goal? How might that challenge the way we think about Christian maturity?

Leaders: Sometimes we assume that mature Christians should have everything sorted. Paul shows us that maturity isn't about believing we have nothing left to learn. It means recognising that we still need Jesus and remaining willing to grow.



In verse 12, Paul says he presses on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him. What difference does it make knowing that Jesus took hold of Paul first?

Leaders: This is an important foundation for the whole passage. Paul isn't trying to earn Jesus' love or secure his place with God through effort. Jesus has already claimed him. Paul's determination is a response to grace.

Emphasise this distinction:

- We don't press on so that Jesus will love us.
- We press on because Jesus has already loved us and made us His own.

Christian growth involves effort, but it isn't about earning God's acceptance.



What might cause someone to stop growing in their faith? Do you recognise any of these tendencies in yourself?

Consider three possible responses:

- Complacency: "I'm a Christian. I'm doing fine. I don't really need to change."
- Discouragement: "I've tried to change, but I never seem to get anywhere."
- Apathy: "I know I should do something, but I just can't be bothered."

Leaders: Give people space to reflect honestly without feeling they have to disclose something personal. Discouragement is not the same as laziness, and those who struggle need encouragement rather than judgement.

Spiritual maturity isn't about having arrived. It's about continuing to follow Jesus, trusting His grace and allowing Him to change us.

4. Leave the past behind and run towards the goal

Focus on verses 13-14.

Paul describes himself as forgetting what is behind and straining towards what lies ahead. **His past included both impressive religious achievements and serious failures. Neither was allowed to determine his future.**

We can become stuck looking backwards in two ways. We can live off past successes, assuming that what God did in us years ago is enough for today. Or we can remain trapped by past failures, believing that our mistakes disqualify us from serving God or growing in faith.

Paul refuses to let either define him.

Discuss together

 Why might past successes be just as much of a hindrance to spiritual growth as past failures?

Leaders: Past successes can make us complacent, while past failures can make us feel unworthy or hopeless. Paul directs his attention away from both and towards Jesus and the future He has for him.

 Paul says he presses on towards the goal and the prize of God's call in Christ Jesus. What do you think that prize is?

Leaders: The prize isn't simply becoming a better version of ourselves or receiving a reward for good behaviour. At the heart of Paul's longing is Jesus Himself: knowing Him, becoming like Him, and ultimately sharing in the resurrection life He promises. Our goal is a relationship with Christ that continues to deepen and reaches its fulfilment in Him.



Is there anything from your past that might be holding you back from taking a step forward with Jesus today?

Leaders: Allow a short silence before inviting responses. Make sharing optional. The point isn't to revisit every past mistake, but to consider whether we are allowing past experiences to dictate our present obedience.

We cannot change the past, but through Christ it does not have to define our future.

5. Citizens of heaven, running together

Focus on verses 17-21.

Paul moves from the picture of an individual runner to the importance of following faithful examples and remembering where we belong.

Philippi was a Roman colony. Its citizens lived away from Rome, but their identity and allegiance remained tied to Rome. Paul draws on that familiar picture to explain that Christians belong to heaven, even while living here on earth.

Our citizenship shapes how we live now. We are called to reflect Jesus in our priorities, relationships, choices and attitudes.

Paul also reminds the church that our future is not limited to what we experience in this life. Jesus will return and transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. Our hope rests in His power, not our ability to perfect ourselves.

Discuss together



What might it look like in everyday life to live as a citizen of heaven while living in our community here on earth?

Leaders: Encourage practical examples, such as showing grace rather than resentment, choosing honesty when dishonesty would be easier, serving people who cannot repay us, or treating others with the dignity Jesus gives them.



Verse 17 encourages believers to follow Paul's example. Why is it important that we don't try to follow Jesus alone? Who has helped you grow in your faith, and who might need your encouragement?

Leaders: Christian growth is personal, but it isn't meant to be solitary. We learn from other believers, encourage one another when the journey gets difficult, and model what it means to keep following Jesus. Life Groups can be places where people are honest about their struggles and are helped to take their next steps.

We belong to Jesus, we are heading towards a future He has promised, and we need one another along the way.

6. Personal response and prayer

Bring the group back to Paul's words in verse 12:

"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."

Explain that the Christian life isn't a race against other Christians. We aren't competing to see who is the most spiritual or who has made the most progress. Each of us is called to follow Jesus faithfully, with our eyes fixed on Him.

| Not there yet. But pressing on.