**1. Motivate**

When have you been thankful you didn’t quit?

* finishing college

A video introduction is available for this Bible study. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_y6kz62qq> If you have no wi-fi where you teach, it is best to load to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/mrh62cfp>

* running a race
* keep working out
* when a job got tough
* playing and practicing a band instrument
* finished building the house
* saving for that vacation/car/house/engagement ring
* staying with my spouse when tempted to divorce
* keep teaching this class

**2. Transition**

Growing in Christ is a lifelong journey.

* God wants us (and helps us) to keep at it – not to give up when things get difficult
* Day by day, we can become more and more like Jesus.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 A Continual Journey

Listen for Paul’s goal.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV) Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

What are the two actions he committed himself to in order to accomplish the one objective of becoming spiritually mature?

* forget what is behind, in the past
* straining toward what is ahead, the future

Paul says to forget the past. What in his past do you think Paul was trying to forget?

* the persecuting he did
* his fleshly efforts to please God
* works of the flesh
* failures, mistakes, sins

What are some things *we* need to forget as we grow and mature in our Christian faith?

* past failures
* old habits
* temptations which used to trip us up all the time
* anger, hate, deceit, lust, greed, … (see Gal. 5:19 – 21 contrasted to verse 22, the Fruit of the Spirit)

Why can the past (good or bad) be a problem for a believer?

* you can carry around the guilt of your past
* don’t let the misdeeds of the past drag you down
* God forgives us but sometimes we don’t forgive ourselves
* we are distracted with memories or images of what we did/saw
* we can also depend too much on good things we did in the past
* don’t let the victories of the past give you false confidence

How do we put the past behind us, how do we get rid of these things which hinder us?

* confession
* gratefully thank God for His forgiveness
* claim His promises to forgive (1 John 1:9)
* receive His enabling through the Holy Spirit to live a righteous life, full of the fruit of the Spirit

In what ways is the imagery of a race an appropriate one to describe what Paul urged his readers to strive for?

* runners will put out all their strength and effort to win the race
* especially in a sprint, they strain to reach out and cross the line first
* they work hard to gain the prize of winning the race
* God wants us to finish strong

What is the prize that Christians are striving to obtain?

* intimate fellowship with Christ
* future glorification with Him
* becoming like Christ more and more
* knowing Jesus as Lord of our lives … continuously

How can Christ help you stay on track and reach the goal?

* give the motivation, the “want to”
* empower you to live a life pleasing to Him
* demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit within your life
* give focus to your life

3.2 The Example of Mature Believers

Listen for an example to follow.

Philippians 3:15-19 (NIV) All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained. 17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

Paul warned against false teachers, “enemies of the cross” What are some words and phrases he used to describe them?

* destiny is destruction
* their God is their stomach
* they actually glory in their shame (consider so called “Pride Week” of LGBT community)
* their mind is on earthly things … materialism, drive for power, desire for popularity, pursuit of pleasure

What *positive* examples does Paul suggest or imply?

* Paul (“imitate me”)
* Other faithful believers
* Jesus (see Philippians 2:5-8)

How can we intentionally position ourselves to benefit from the example of others?

* reading of Christian biographies
* associate with mature Christians – choose friends wisely
* involved in Bible Study groups
* personal Bible study
* prayer and accountability partners

How is salvation more than receiving “insurance” against eternal destruction (a fire escape from hell)?

* we do more than escape the bad punishment
* we are to experience positive growth
* we are to become a part of the kingdom/rule of God
* we learn to yield daily to the rule of the Spirit of God who actually lives within our lives
* we gain new attributes – Fruit of the Spirit, Spiritual armor, Spiritual gifts
* we become a positive influence – participate in the Great Commission

3.3 Glorious Transformation in Heaven

Listen for where is our citizenship.

Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Consider the true community of believers and wherein is their true citizenship.

* The Body of Christ … the Church
* Citizenship is in heaven – that is where we belong
* 1 Peter 2:11 (NIV) Dear friends, I urge you, *as aliens and strangers in the world*, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

What characterizes citizens of heaven?

* empowered by the Spirit of God
* under submission to God’s rule in our lives
* bodies transformed
* freed from presence of sin

What makes these verses challenging?

* we look forward to this
* right now we’re stuck in our old sinful bodies
* we’re struggling with issues … within ourselves, between ourselves and others
* the promise sometimes seems like “pie in the sky, by and by

How can knowing that our citizenship is in heaven encourage us in this life?

* we often feel like those around us are so different
* we feel like we don’t really belong to our culture, our society – and we DON’T
* note 1 Peter 2:11 (NIV) Dear friends, I urge you, *as aliens and strangers in the world*, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.
* just like when you are in a foreign country – when you get home, you feel like you belong – you feel like you are in the right place

How do we balance living as citizens of the particular nation we are from as well as being citizens of heaven?

* remember, keep in mind where you really belong
* the language they speak around you is different than that of a citizen of heaven
* the customs are different
* maintain the customs of God’s Kingdom (the realm where God rules), not the customs of the world
* you listen to news through the “filter” of God’s Truth
* you reject entertainment that does not align with the morality of God’s Kingdom

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

A cartoon of a child with a red beret

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Identify.

* Growing in Christ is a continual journey.
* Identify a specific area of your Christian life where you have stopped growing spiritually.
* Seek forgiveness and ask for grace to continue growing.

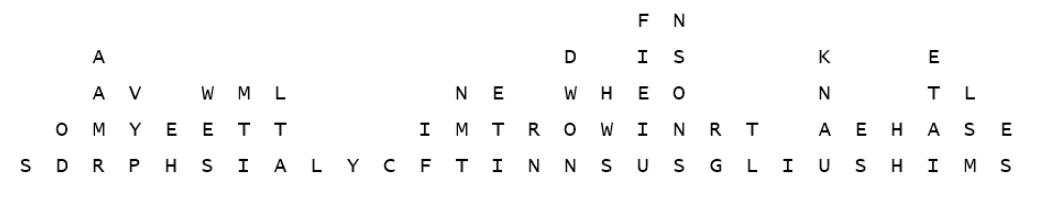
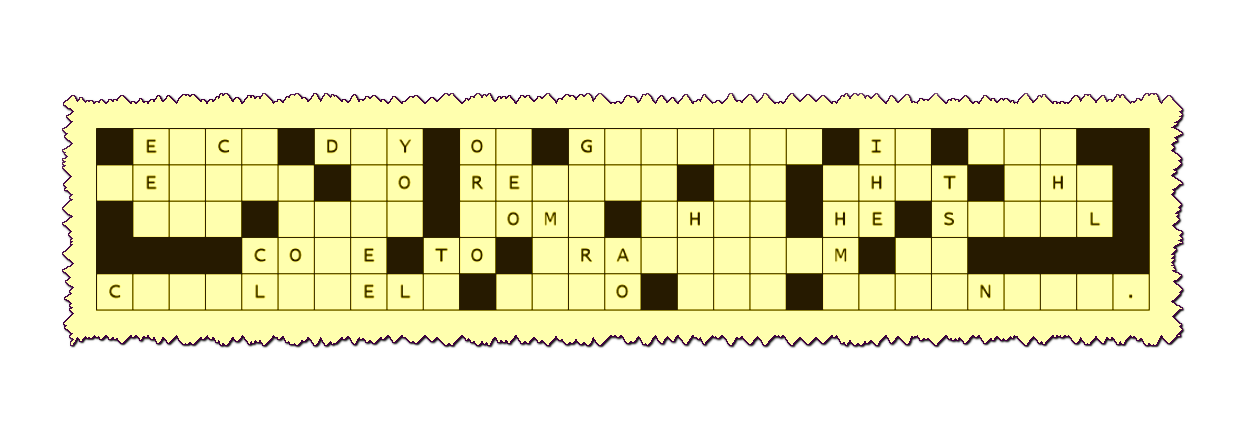
Initiate.

* We grow spiritually through the example of others.
* Initiate an intentional relationship with a more mature believer who inspires you to grow in your walk with Christ.

Invest.

* Others grow spiritually through our example.
* Pay it forward by inviting a less mature believer into an intentional relationship with you.
* Help this person grow in his or her walk with Christ.

Fallen Phrases Puzzle



A person in a garment

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I find the shoddy work of our padawan decoding staff disturbing. Many letters of the secret message have fallen straight down off the decoding form. The former staff have been posted to Tatooine for their crimes. Meanwhile, you have been chosen to complete this vital task. Look for single letter columns, then two or three letter words. Determine which letters make appropriate words. See that you complete your task correctly! Help and other opportunities for family learning found at <https://tinyurl.com/mrh62cfp>