# SESSION 3
# LEAD IT: COLLEGE AGE

## GOALS

As students experience Philippians 2, they will. . .

- Gain a greater understanding of what life in Christ can really be like.
- compare their own interests with the interests of Christ.
- Optional Character Study: see what it takes to be a sold-out disciple by examining the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus;

## MATERIALS: Group

- Colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- Whiteboard
- Optional: A prize for the student who correctly answers the "Bonus" review question.

## MATERIALS: Each Student

- A Bible
- A pen
- Student pages for Session 3
- Scripture sheet for Philippians 2

## SESSION INTRO

**Prayer**

After your group has gathered, open in prayer. Give a minute or two for students to put aside the distractions of the day and focus on why they're here. Pray that their hearts will be changed as they uncover truth in God's Word.

**Review**

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

- **What were at least two things Paul prayed for the Philippians in chapter 1?**
- **What do we have going for us that can help us break the "commit-fail cycle"?**
- **Bonus Question: Paul shared a personal dilemma in Philippians 1. What two things was he torn between?**

## DIGGING IN

Ask the group to read Philippians 2:1–5 from their Scripture sheets. As they read, they should use two different colors to mark:

1. **Anything that describes what we have in Christ.**
2. **Any instructions Paul gave the Philippians (i.e., how they/ we should live).**

After your students have read and marked the passage, ask them to tell you (based on the passage) what we can enjoy when we have a relationship with Christ. Explain that you're going to call these descriptions "anchors." As they share, list the information on the board in the order given below. As you write these on the board, ask your students to write these anchors in the numbered spaces provided in the chart on their journal pages.

*1. Encouragement from being united with Christ*
*2. Comfort from Christ's love*
*3. Fellowship with the Spirit*
*4. Tenderness and compassion*

## TAKING IT INWARD

These are some great anchors—encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness and compassion! Ask that each student circle one or two anchors that he/she could use right now. Then invite them to take a personal retreat with God, to learn more about the anchor(s) they chose.

At this point, students may want to move to the corners of the room, a hallway, or an empty room nearby, where they can get alone with God for a few minutes. When they get to their spots, they should use their Bibles to read the Scripture passages listed on their journal pages under the anchor(s) they chose. Suggest that they look for any promises that appear in the passages. There is space in the chart to note what they observe.

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Encouragement from being united with Christ**<br>John 16:33<br>Romans 8:17–18<br>Ephesians 3:6 | **3. Fellowship with the Spirit**<br>John 16:5–15<br>John 14:16–17<br>John 14:26–27 |
| **2. Comfort from Christ's love**<br>John 14:1–3<br>Romans 8:38–39<br>1 John 4:7–11<br>Zephaniah 3:17 | **4. God's tenderness and compassion**<br>2 Corinthians 1:3–6<br>Matthew 11:25–30 1<br>Peter 5:6–7 |

After a few minutes, call your group back together to share what they found. You may want to start with these questions.

**What did you learn about your anchor?**

**Did you find yourself receiving what you needed as you read about your anchor? In what ways? What promises did you find?**

After several minutes of sharing, have students look again at their Scripture sheets. Ask them what instructions they found in Philippians 2:1–5. As they answer, list these on the board. There is space for them to record these on their journal pages, under the heading "How We Should Act with Each Other." Your list (and their chart) will look something like this:

**How We Should Act with Each Other:**
*-Be like-minded: having the same love,-being one in spirit and purpose. (v. 2)*
*-Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. (v. 3)*
*-In humility, consider others better than ourselves. (v. 3)*
*-Look to the interests of others, as well as to our own. (v. 4)*
*-Our attitudes should be the same as Christ's.* (v. 5)*

*Just a note: You'll be investigating this one in depth in Session 4.

After all the instructions are on the board, ask students to privately evaluate themselves and the group or church with regard to each instruction. They can do this by drawing an "up" or a "down" arrow next to each instruction on their journal pages. An up arrow means "doing okay here." A down arrow means "there's room for improvement."

After a few minutes, ask your students to share their responses. You can prompt them by asking:

**Which of these do you think you need help with personally? What makes you think this?**

**Which of these instructions do we need help with as a group (or church)?**

Your students may think that being "like-minded" sounds impossible since there will always be disagreements. If this comes up, let Scripture interpret Scripture by showing that Paul defined "like-minded" in Philippians 2:2. Let your students discover for themselves what Paul meant by "like-minded." Then continue the discussion by working as a group to evaluate each instruction.

Ask your students for practical suggestions as to how they might obey these instructions as a group. Appoint a "scribe" to record the suggestions, and after the session, make copies for all the members of your group. Remember, these aren't just "good ideas," but actual commands from God regarding our behavior as His people! If we want to have a close relationship with Christ, then our lives should show obedience to these commands.

## INSIGHT

The concepts of "selfish ambition" and "vain conceit" in Philippians 2:3 are well known in our society. Since birth, we are taught to believe that success and self are the highest level of achievement! These concepts draw a much more graphic picture in the original Greek language.

"Selfish Ambition," which is transliterated as "eritheia" [er-ith-i'-ah] was a political term defined as "electioneering" or running for office. Strong's Concordance tells us that this word is found before New Testament times only in Aristotle where it denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

**Focusing for a moment on today's political arena, is it possible to abide by this verse and still win elected office?**

**How would you evaluate our current political system in light of this instruction? What role, if any, should Christians play in politics?**

**Have you been tempted to promote yourself by unfair means to gain authority or status?**

The phrase "vain conceit" is transliterated as "kenodoxia" [ken-od-ox-ee'-ah] and defined as "vain glory, groundless, self esteem, empty pride."

**How does the concept of "lowliness of mind" and "esteeming others as better than yourself" run counterculture to our "selfie society"?**

**How do you picture our selfie-taking generation in 10 years? What will our workforce look like? How will families develop differently with parents who viewed constant self-promotion and face shots as the norm?**

Perhaps the most cut-to-the-chase version of this verse comes from The Message, paraphrased as this:

*Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top.*
Philippians 2:3 (The Message)

**Without getting too specific with names, when was the last time you witnessed (or participated in) "pushing your way to the front" or "sweet talking your way to the top?"**

If you close the session here, invite group members to share about any particular instruction that consistently gives them trouble. After each student shares, ask for another student to pray for the one who shared.

If you're doing the Character Study below, skip this exercise. Otherwise, close your session by asking students to boil their thoughts down to a single fact about following Christ. Have them write this short statement under the heading "What I Learned about Following Christ" on their journal pages.

## CHARACTER STUDY (Optional)

Explain that for now, you're going to skip the middle part of Philippians 2, since the last part of the chapter talks about two guys who lived out the instructions they just uncovered in verses 1–5. These fellow workers with Paul, named Timothy and Epaphroditus (pronounced *ih-paf-ruh-DIE-tus*), give us a standard to follow in serving God.

## DIGGING DEEPER

Have your students read Philippians 2:19–30 using their Scripture sheets. As they read, they should use one color to mark every description of Timothy. With another color, they should mark every description of Epaphroditus. (You may want to give Epaphroditus a nickname like "Big E" or "E-Man" to keep it simple.)

When they've finished reading and marking, ask the group to tell you what they found out about Timothy and Epaphroditus. Challenge them to be as detailed as possible, and record the facts on the whiteboard. Your board will begin to look something like this:

| **Timothy** | **Epaphroditus** |
|---|---|
| *-Paul had no one else like him. (v. 20)*<br>*-Took a genuine interest in the welfare of the Philippians. (v. 20)*<br>*-Looked out for the interests of Christ rather than his own, unlike the others. (v. 21)*<br>*-Had proven himself. (v. 22)*<br>*-Had served with Paul in the work of the gospel. (v. 22)*<br>*-Served like a son with a father. (v. 22)* | *-A fellow brother, worker, and soldier. (v. 25)*<br>*-Was the Philippians' messenger to Paul. (v. 25)*<br>*-Took care of Paul's needs. (v. 25)*<br>*-Longed for the Philippians. (v. 26)*<br>*-Was sick and almost died. (v. 27)*<br>*-Was distressed that they knew he was sick. (v. 26)*<br>*-Paul wanted him (and men like him) to be honored. (v. 29)*<br>*-Risked his life; almost died for the work of Christ. (v. 30)* |

## TAKING IT INWARD

These were some pretty committed guys! But their spiritual profiles weren't given for us to admire—they're here for us to imitate. Give your group members a few minutes to respond in solitude to the questions below. (These questions are also printed on their journal pages.) Then discuss several of these questions as a group.

**How would you describe the commitment of these two men? What traits did they have in common?**

**Do your interests, like Timothy's, line up with the interests of Christ? What are the top five things that have your interest right now? (You can easily tell this by how you spend your time and money.)**

**What do you think are Christ's top five interests? (How do you think Jesus would spend His time and money?)**

**Would any of your spiritual mentors be able to describe you the way Timothy and Epaphroditus were described by their mentor, Paul?**

**Epaphroditus risked his life for the work of the gospel. What would you be willing to sacrifice?**

If students don't come to this conclusion on their own, steer them to the fact that Timothy and Epaphroditus were unselfish. Both exemplified a high degree of self-sacrifice. Timothy looked out for the interests of Christ (rather than his own) and took a genuine interest in others; Epaphroditus served the Philippians until he was deathly sick.

Selfishness is such a common characteristic among people today that we hardly even notice it in ourselves and others. “Looking out for yourself” is commonly considered the thing to do in relationships, in careers, and in almost every area of life. Yet Jesus tells us to take the back seat for others. Ask your students to share some common examples of selfishness today.

Then ask for suggestions as to how their group could begin to live *selflessly*. Here are some ideas:

- Reach out to someone on campus who needs help.
- Check in with an elderly person at church.
- Come alongside a college campus ministry (Cru, Intervarsity, etc.) that needs some help.

After this study session, your group may want to devise a plan of action.

## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

This session has the potential to be highly convicting, but don’t let anyone leave feeling defeated. Spend some time in prayer, allowing the students to ask God to “work in them” the characteristics He’s shown them in Scripture. Encourage them to respond to their convictions.

If you haven’t done this yet, ask students to boil their thoughts down to a single fact about following Christ. Have them write this short statement under the heading “What I Learned about Following Christ” on their journal pages.