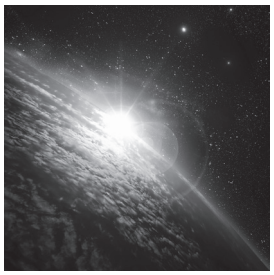
SESSION 7
LEAD IT: MIDDLE SCHOOL



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
- 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
- Scripture sheet for Philippians 3

STUDY NOTE:
While your Prep It for Session 7 was divided into four segments, in a nod to the middle school attention span, the middle school session addresses only the fourth segment "*To become like Christ in His death*."

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 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

DIGGING IN

Study Note: Other guides for this session (high school, college age) address all four desires that you just noted. As noted above, we have selected one, "to become like Christ in His death," to explore for the middle school guide. You may want to check out the options in the other guides.

Share in your own words:

Any one of these desires promises incredible fulfillment and would give you rich rewards along the way if you chose to make it a life pursuit. For our purposes today, we're going to look at the one desire that the others seem to point toward: *To become like Christ in His death.*

So, 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 it will help to search the Scriptures to find out what he was really saying.

Have students look up the following Scriptures in their Bibles. (The references are printed on their journal pages.) As they read, ask them to note what they say about what Jesus was like in His death. Encourage them to be as detailed as possible.

Philippians 2:5–11 **Matthew 26:39** **John 10:17–18**

TAKING IT INWARD

After a few minutes, call for your group's attention. Ask for volunteers to share anything that stood out to them about what Jesus was like in His death. Possible responses are listed below.

What Was Jesus Like in His Death?
-He was humble and obedient.
-He submitted Himself to death—even on a cross.
-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.
-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.

Then ask:

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 as you approached death?

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

Distribute a blank slip of paper to each students. Ask them to think about their responses to these next questions and then write their responses on the slip of paper.

> **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?"**
>
> **What will it take to get there? Is there any part of your life that you are holding from Jesus? Let the Holy Spirit speak to you about any sins, temptations, selfishness, or impurity. Write these on the slip of paper.**

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 students are ready, have them 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 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 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 on their journal page in the space under "What I Learned about Following Christ."