



# DISCIPLESHIP | **EXPLORED**

WHAT'S THE BEST LOVE  
YOU'VE EVER KNOWN?

**LEADER'S HANDBOOK**

**Discipleship Explored Leader's Handbook (3rd Edition)**

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# WELCOME TO DISCIPLESHIP | **EXPLORED**

The last recorded words of Jesus – “Go and make disciples” – ought to be the first priority of his followers. But how do we make disciples?

As a student, my experience of being discipled was pretty straightforward. Every week or so, a kind and persistent friend would make me a cup of tea. Then we’d look at a short section of Scripture together to see what it said about God, what it said about us, and what we should do as a result. Then he’d ask me if there was any way he could be praying for me. Occasionally, if it was a good week, I’d be offered a cookie. It was completely unassuming, and utterly life-changing.

My hope for *Discipleship Explored* is that it would equip you to do just what that friend did for me. I want to reassure you that you don’t need to have years of teaching experience. All you need is the prayerful desire to explore Paul’s letter to the Philippians alongside another believer or group of believers.

And here’s the best part. The pressure is taken off you because the focus isn’t on you. The focus is on Jesus Christ, and thankfully he is a great deal more magnetic, more persuasive, and more powerful than any of us.

So let’s open up Philippians with a sense of wonder, joy, and expectation. Paul is about to show us the greatest love we’ve ever known.

**Barry Cooper**



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SECTION 1  
**HOW TO RUN  
DISCIPLESHIP EXPLORED**

**[discipleship.explo.red](https://discipleship.explo.red)**

is the official website for *Discipleship Explored*, featuring content for both guests and leaders.

Registering your course is free, and gives you access to even more content. You'll also be able to watch the films online and share them with others.





# GETTING STARTED

## **What's the aim of *Discipleship Explored*?**

The key phrase of Philippians is "in Christ."

So the aim of *Discipleship Explored* is to thrill followers of Jesus with the confidence, unity, righteousness, and love which are theirs "in Christ."

## **Who's it for?**




*Discipleship Explored* is designed to be enjoyed by all followers of Christ, whether veteran or just starting out. You can run it one to one or in larger groups.




## **What's the structure of *Discipleship Explored*?**

*Discipleship Explored* has eight sessions, each one exploring a short section of Philippians. The main components are simple:

- **Film** | 15 minutes
- **Explore Philippians** | 45 minutes

Between each session, there are Follow Up Bible readings for guests to explore at home. They're designed to help believers establish a rhythm of daily Scripture-reading, memorization, and prayer.

	 Film	 Discussion	 Follow Up
Session 1 <b>Confident in Christ</b>	Confident in Christ	Philippians 1:1-11	Assurance: Ephesians 2:8-10 John 10:27-28
Session 2 <b>Living in Christ</b>	Living in Christ	Philippians 1:12-26	The Holy Spirit: Ephesians 1:13-14 Galatians 5:16-23
Session 3 <b>One in Christ</b>	One in Christ	Philippians 1:27 – 2:11	Meeting Together: Colossians 3:12-17 1 Peter 2:9-12
Session 4 <b>Obedient in Christ</b>	Obedient in Christ	Philippians 2:12-30	Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 Psalm 19:7-8

		 <b>Film</b>		 <b>Discussion</b>		 <b>Follow Up</b>	
Session 5	<b>Righteous in Christ</b>	Righteous in Christ	Philippians 3:1-9	Righteousness: Romans 3:20-24 Romans 5:6-10			
Session 6	<b>Transformed in Christ</b>	Transformed in Christ	Philippians 3:10-21	Pressing On: Matthew 6:19-24 Matthew 7:24-27			
Session 7	<b>Rejoicing in Christ</b>	Rejoicing in Christ	Philippians 4:1-9	Prayer: Matthew 6:5-13 Colossians 1:3-14			
Session 8	<b>Content in Christ</b>	Content in Christ	Philippians 4:10-23	Contentment: 1 Timothy 6:6-12 Colossians 3:1-10			

**How long does each session last?**

*Discipleship Explored* is as flexible as you are. You can cover each session in an hour if time is at a premium. The session will take a little longer if you prefer to meet beforehand for a meal or coffee.

**What's the aim of each film?**

The films are designed to unpack the meaning of Philippians and to help believers apply it. They're written and presented by Barry Cooper, and feature interview footage from believers all over the world.

**How should I start each session?**

If possible, invite your guest(s) to arrive about 30 minutes before the session officially starts. That gives you time to share food or coffee first so you can relax and get to know each other better. It also helps you start and finish your session on time.

Hospitality is one of the ways the Philippian church "work out [their] salvation" (Philippians 2:12), so this is a great way to put Philippians into practice.

**How should I end each session?**

At the end of each session, thank your guest(s) for coming, and make it clear that they're very welcome to stay around if they'd like. Some of the best conversations will happen over a cup of coffee once the session has ended.

**What's the best way to prepare for *Discipleship Explored*?**

- Pray! And keep praying throughout the series.
- Read Philippians several times.

- Get to know your fellow leaders, if you have any. A major theme of Philippians is unity (the Greek word *koinonia*) between believers, so it's good for guests to experience that firsthand.
- Read through the discussion questions and answers in this Leader's Handbook.
- Watch the short films so you know what to expect.
- Familiarize yourself with the "Questions About Philippians" section on page 115.
- Prepare yourself for the "big seven" tough questions on page 39.
- Be ready to share briefly with guests how you became a follower of Jesus (1 Peter 3:15).
- See "How do I encourage people to come?" in the FAQs on page 37.
- Register your course at [www.discipleship.explo.red/register](http://www.discipleship.explo.red/register) That will give you access to additional resources for leaders and guests.

## Why Philippians?

*Discipleship Explored* isn't a systematic look at all the individual elements that are involved in discipleship, though you will find material here on reading the Bible, being committed to the local church, prayer, evangelism, serving others, and so on. Instead, we look at one short letter in which Paul's main focus is Christ and his "surpassing worth" (Philippians 3:8). This is by design.

My pastor, Larry Kirk, tells the story of two dancers. The first puts her earbuds in, hits "play," and, because she hears the music she loves best in all the world, she starts to dance with rhythm and energy and grace and joy. She's captivated and enthralled by the music.

The second dancer looks at the first, doesn't see the earbuds, and thinks, "That looks fun!" And though she can't hear any music herself, she tries to copy the moves anyway.

It works for a time, sort of. But because she can't hear the music, her movement is clunky, hesitant, and self-conscious. She doesn't seem to enjoy dancing the way the first dancer does. And before too long, she's running out of energy.

Some books and resources on discipleship can put you in the position of that second dancer. They encourage you to learn all the right moves – read your Bible, pray, go to church – but without enabling you to hear the music that drives it all.

The aim of *Discipleship Explored* is to "turn up the music." What we really need, if we're to be disciples of Jesus, aren't clever techniques or lists of things to do. Lots of people know all the right moves, but never become genuine disciples.

What we need, first and foremost, is what the Philippians needed. We need our hearts to be captivated and enthralled by the surpassing worth of Christ.



SECTION 2  
**DISCIPLESHIP EXPLORED**  
**SESSIONS**





# INTRODUCTION



This section contains each of the eight sessions you'll be exploring with your guest(s). It includes all the material in their Handbook, plus additional notes and answers. Text **in bold** indicates the suggested script for leaders.

- If anyone misses a session, bring them up to speed before you start. The talk summaries will help you do this. (If you've registered your course at **www.discipleship.explo.red**, you and your guests will also have online access to the films – ideal for catching up on missed sessions.)
- Some guests may wonder how we know that the book of Philippians, or the Bible as a whole, is reliable. That's a great question to raise, but it can take a while to answer well. Either discuss it one to one at the end of the session or recommend a book such as *Can I Really Trust The Bible?* by Barry Cooper.

**Key**

 Discuss

 Watch a film

 Read a Bible passage


 Pray

 Follow Up



# SESSION 1

## CONFIDENT IN CHRIST

 **Welcome to Discipleship Explored! We're about to see Episode 1. As you're watching, have this question in mind: "How can I be confident that I really am a follower of Jesus?" You can find that question, with space for notes, on page 7 of the Handbook.**

 **Confident in Christ** (Philippians 1:1-11, 14 min 36 sec)

Note: The following talk summary is on page 8 of the Handbook.

- God in his goodness is completely in control of everything – not just when things are going the way we want, but also when they aren't.
- We see this played out as Jesus was dying on the cross: the greatest imaginable good was being achieved by God even when human beings were doing their very worst.
- Because God is in control, we can be confident that nothing can prevent him from completing the good work he has begun in every believer (Philippians 1:6).
- We can be confident that God is working to change us internally if our lives start to reflect this externally.
- Because God is at work in us, we won't be passive. We'll want to respond by growing in our knowledge and love of him (Philippians 1:9-11).

**Christ (v 1)** | A title meaning “God’s anointed one.” Sometimes translated as Messiah.

**God’s holy people (v 1)** | Those who God has set apart for himself. This is often translated as “saints.” Every follower of Jesus is a saint. The collective description for God’s holy people is the “church” (see Philippians 3:6 and 4:15).

**Overseers and deacons (v 1)** | Church leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

**Grace (v 2)** | God’s goodness to people who do not deserve it.

**Gospel (v 5, 7)** | The good news that Jesus Christ lived, died, was resurrected, and ascended so that we can be reconciled to God and enjoy him forever.

**Day of Christ (v 6, 10)** | The day when Jesus Christ will return to judge the world.

**Righteousness (v 11)** | Perfect goodness. To be righteous is to be “pure and blameless” (v 10). Righteousness can only come “through Jesus Christ” because only he – as God come to earth – has lived a perfectly pure and blameless life.



**Let’s read Philippians 1:1-11.**



**1. According to Philippians 1:6, what is Paul confident about?**

Paul is confident that God has begun a good work in the Philippian believers, and that he will finish it. In other words, their growing Christian maturity and ultimate salvation are assured.

**2. How can he be so confident? (See verse 5.)**

Because of their “partnership in the gospel.”

**3. What do you think that phrase means, in practical terms? (See Philippians 2:25 and 4:14-16.)**

The Philippians took care of Paul’s needs and “shared in his troubles.” This isn’t just about sending money, but also care and compassion expressed in other ways.

**4. So how can we be confident that God is working in us? What might that look like in your life and in your day-to-day relationships?**

It's a good sign when we find ourselves wanting to serve fellow believers in our church, wanting to help share the good news about Jesus, showing hospitality, caring for others, etc.

**5. Someone might say, "If God will finish this work he started, why do I need to do anything?" What would you say to them?**

If we don't want to do anything, it's doubtful God is working in us. One of the signs God is working in us is that we have a desire to serve him (and others) better.

**6. A Christian friend is going through a tough time. They don't feel confident that God loves them and is in control of what is happening to them. Is there something from the film or our discussion that might encourage them?**

One encouragement might be Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."

Another encouragement is what happened at the cross, which is the ultimate proof of God's love for us. God the Son willingly took the punishment we deserve, so that we can be reconciled to him and enjoy him forever. He sees us as we are, yet he still loves us – enough to give up his life for us!

The cross is also the ultimate proof of God's control. Even those who killed God's Son only succeeded in bringing God's loving plan to pass. (See Acts 4:27-28.)

**7. (If time) What has been most striking for you during this session?**

This question helps you move naturally into one-to-one conversations after the session has ended.

 **In verse 9, Paul prays for the Philippians. Let me pray that same prayer for us now.**

Father, thank you for bringing us here today. Thank you for your great love. I pray that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. We ask these things in Jesus' name and for your glory and praise. Amen.

→ There's a Follow Up section on page 11 of your Handbook. That's a daily plan to help us discover more about the theme of this session. Let's aim to finish that before next time and we'll discuss it then. Thank you for coming!

(Note to leader: The Follow Up studies are printed below to help you prepare for the next session.)

Paul is confident in Philippians 1:6 that God will complete the "good work" that he began in the Philippians. This "good work" is salvation. The Follow Up activities this week focus on how we can be confident of salvation.

🗨️ **Sunday:** Think over what you heard in church this week. What did you find most helpful?

📖 **Day 1: Philippians 1:1-11** (Most Bibles have a contents page at the start to help you find particular books.)

If you can, memorize this key verse:

*"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 1:6)

 **Day 2: Ephesians 2:8-10**

**1. Look at verse 8. How are Christians saved?**

By grace, through faith.

**2. Can Christians save themselves? Why or why not? (See verses 8 and 9.)**

No. Even faith is a gift from God.

**3. What cannot save us? (See verse 9.)**


Our “works.”

**4. Are “good works” (i.e. doing good things / not doing bad things) still important for us to do? (See verse 10.)**

Yes. We are “created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”

If you’re a Christian, thank God that he has given you the “gift” of faith (verse 8). Praise him for his amazing grace. Ask your Father for growing confidence in him, rather than in your own “works.”

When you pray, one helpful model to have in mind is ACTS: **A**doration (praising God for who he is), **C**onfession (speaking honestly about what we’ve done wrong), **T**hanksgiving (expressing gratitude for all God is doing in your life), and **S**upplication (this is what Paul means in Philippians 4:6 when he says, “Present your requests to God”).

 **Day 3: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jesus, speaking in John 14:6)**

Think about what this verse means for you. Try to memorize it if you can.

 **Day 4: Read Jesus' words in John 10:27-28.**

In this part of John's Gospel, Jesus describes himself as "the good shepherd," and his followers are described as his "sheep."

**1. In verse 27, how do "sheep" respond to Jesus?**

"My sheep listen to my voice ... they follow me."

**2. Look at verse 28. What will Jesus give to those who follow him?**

Eternal life.


**3. How confident can we be of salvation, if we follow Jesus? (See verse 28.)**

Very! Jesus says, "They shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand."

**4. Look at verse 27. What is it about us that shows we are followers of Jesus?**

We listen to his voice. In other words, we obey Jesus.

Thank God for this stunning promise: "No one will snatch them out of my hand" (verse 28). If we belong to Christ, we can be sure of our salvation. We can trust him completely. He is stronger than anything or anyone else, and he will not let us go.

 **Day 5:** Re-read the passages you've read this week. Pick a verse you found particularly helpful and write it down below.

 **Day 6:** Get ready for *Discipleship Explored* by reading Philippians 1:12-26.