

BGCC Community Group Guide



Character of The Church

September 6th

The Persevering Church

Philippians 3:12-4:1

The Persevering Church

Introduction

Perseverance is **continuing when it would be easier to quit**. Paul does not describe the Christian life as one where we eventually arrive, figure everything out, or become immune to difficulty. Instead, he says, “I press on.”

That is the picture of the church we see in Philippians 3:12–4:1. A persevering church is not a perfect church or a church without problems. It is a church that keeps pursuing Jesus together, especially when following Him becomes difficult.

Paul gives us four ways a church can press on: **keep pursuing Jesus, walk with one another, remember where our true home is, and stand firm in the Lord.**

Section 1 – Keep Pursuing Jesus

Philippians 3:12–14

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

— Philippians 3:14

Summary

Paul begins with humility. He admits that he has not already arrived or become perfect. Even after everything he has experienced with Jesus, he knows there is still more growth ahead. Paul refuses to let either his **past failures or past successes** determine where he goes next. Failure can make us believe we are disqualified, while success can make us believe we have already arrived. Paul chooses neither. He looks forward and presses on toward Jesus.

The Christian life is not about reaching a point where we no longer need Jesus. It is about continually pursuing Him. We can celebrate what God has done without assuming that God is finished.

Group Question: Why do you think both past failures and past successes can keep us from moving forward in our faith?

Personal Relevance

It is easy to let something from our past define us. Maybe we remember a spiritual failure, a broken relationship, a poor decision, or a season when we weren't following Jesus faithfully. We can begin to think, *"Because I failed there, I can't be useful here."*

But the opposite can also happen. Maybe we have experienced spiritual growth, served faithfully, helped others, or seen God do something incredible through us. Those are good things—but they can become dangerous if we start finding our identity in what God has done **through us** instead of in what Christ has done **for us**.

Perseverance begins when we keep looking at Jesus. We can be grateful for yesterday without living there. We can acknowledge our failures/successes without being controlled or directed by them. There is still a next step with Jesus.

Flow Question: What tends to be harder for you to leave behind—past failures or past successes? Why?

Reflection Question: What is one thing from your past that may be keeping you from fully pursuing Jesus today?

Section 2 – Don't Walk Alone

Philippians 3:15–17

"Join together in following my example... and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do."

— Philippians 3:17

Summary

Paul does not tell the Philippians to persevere by themselves. He points them toward other people who are following Jesus faithfully. Christianity is something we learn not only through teaching but through watching other believers live it out.

We all have moments when our faith is weak, we are discouraged, or we simply don't know what to do next. In those moments, God often works through His people. Sometimes perseverance looks like receiving encouragement. Other times, it looks like being the person who shows up for someone else.

The church is strongest when people know one another well enough to walk through difficult seasons together.

Group Question: Who is someone whose example has helped you follow Jesus more faithfully? What did you see in their life?

Personal Relevance

It is possible to attend church every week and still walk through life alone. We can smile, shake hands, say “I'm doing great,” and never let anyone know that we're struggling. But perseverance was never meant to be a solo project.

There will be times when we need someone else to encourage us, pray for us, challenge us, or simply sit beside us. There will also be times when someone else needs us to do those things for them.

Sometimes community begins with something very simple: **taking the next step toward another person.** Joining a group. Introducing yourself. Telling someone that you're struggling. Checking on a friend. Bringing a meal. Sitting with someone who is hurting. We don't persevere *around* one another. We persevere **with** one another.

Flow Question: What makes it difficult for people to let others know when they are struggling?

Reflection Question: Who knows you well enough right now to notice when you're discouraged and encourage you to keep going?

Section 3 – Remember Where Home Is

Philippians 3:18–21

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.”
— Philippians 3:20

Summary

Paul contrasts those whose minds are set on earthly things with believers whose citizenship is in heaven. Our circumstances may change, but our ultimate home and hope do not. This matters because life will change. Governments change. Culture changes. Families go through difficult seasons. Churches experience loss and uncertainty. Our own plans can fall apart.

Paul reminds us that our hope is not ultimately tied to what is happening around us. Our Savior is coming, and our citizenship is in heaven.

That doesn't mean we withdraw from the world. It means we live differently within it. Because this world is not our final home, we can serve, love, give, forgive, and share the gospel without making this life our ultimate source of hope.

Group Question: How does remembering that our citizenship is in heaven change the way we respond when life around us feels unstable?

Personal Relevance

We naturally put our hope in things we can see: our family, career, finances, health, plans, church, community, or the direction of our culture. These things matter, but none of them can carry the weight of our ultimate hope. When those things change, our faith can feel shaken if they have become our foundation.

Paul gives us something more secure. **Jesus does not change.** Our future does not depend on everything going according to our plans. Our hope is ultimately in Christ and His return. And because our home is heaven, we don't retreat from the world—we engage it. We love our neighbors. We serve people. We share the gospel. We make disciples. We live as citizens of heaven while we are still here.

Flow Question: What earthly things are most likely to compete with Jesus for your attention, hope, or security?

Reflection Question: How can you make yourself *that person* who is close enough to help someone else in their situations?

Section 4 – Stand Firm in the Lord

Philippians 4:1

“Stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!”
— Philippians 4:1

Summary

Paul brings everything together with a simple command: **stand firm in the Lord**. Notice what Paul doesn't say. He doesn't say to stand firm because you're strong, because you have everything figured out, or because nothing difficult will happen. He tells them to stand firm **in the Lord**.

Perseverance is faithfulness at the testing point. It is easy to talk about faithfulness when everything is going well. The real test comes when following Jesus costs us something. Paul himself was writing from prison, yet his message throughout Philippians is filled with joy. His circumstances were difficult, but his hope was not dependent on his circumstances.

Group Question: What is the difference between simply surviving a difficult season and intentionally standing firm in the Lord?

Personal Relevance

There will be moments when we are tired, discouraged, disappointed, confused, or hurt. There may be times when following Jesus costs us something significant. Or else, times when the task seems impossible and we feel alone, tired, and dwarfed by the scale of our situations.

The answer is not to pretend those things aren't difficult. Perseverance means choosing faithfulness **when faithfulness becomes difficult**.

So we keep worshiping. We keep praying. We keep serving. We keep forgiving. We keep encouraging. We keep sharing the gospel. We keep loving our neighbors. We keep pointing people toward Jesus.

And when we're tired, **we press on**. why?

Because Jesus already did what we could never do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life we couldn't live, died the death our sin deserved, and rose again so that we could have life and relationship with God. We don't persevere to earn what Christ has already given us. **We persevere because of what Christ has already done**.

Flow Question: What usually makes you most tempted to quit or pull back from doing a hard thing Christ desires of you?

Reflection Question: Where is God asking you to press on right now, even though it would be easier to quit?

Conclusion

A persevering church is not a perfect church. It is not a church without problems, struggles, disagreements, or difficult seasons.

It is a church that keeps coming back to Jesus.

Paul's challenge gives us four ways to do that:

1. **Keep pursuing Jesus.** Don't let past failures disqualify you or past successes convince you that you've arrived.
2. **Don't walk alone.** We need people who will encourage us, and others need us to walk with them.
3. **Remember where home is.** Our citizenship is in heaven, and our hope is in Jesus—not in circumstances that constantly change.
4. **Stand firm in the Lord.** When faithfulness becomes difficult, we don't quit. We press on.

The reason we can persevere is not because we are strong enough. **Our hope is in the One who is.** Jesus has already gone before us. He has already overcome sin and death. He has already secured our future. And He is coming again.

Stand firm in the Lord.