

STUDY NOTES

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The following content is based on the message “Defining Life in Difficult Times” on 3/15/20 at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these study notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective community groups.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 1:18-30

DEFINING TERMS: LIFE

Socrates says, “The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.” While there may be times where we understand that there will be difficulty in life, we will not have the proper perspective until we have the proper definition of life. According to Paul, true life is found in Christ and nothing else. Life in Christ means that our own plans and hopes are secondary.

Your definition of life determines your outlook on life.

- Paul could say, “For me to live is Christ”. If we were honest, most of us probably would say that we live for something else based on the way we live. Fill in the blank for how you live: “For me to live is _____.”

A life can be defined by Christ or it can be defined by many other things. Paul found his life in Christ, which means when his plans and circumstances changed, his definition of life didn't change.

Your definition of life determines the order of your life.

- How can you tell if you are putting your plans and hopes secondary to Christ's?

Because our life is ultimately found in Christ, we are called to live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. **Read Philippians 1:27.** A manner worthy of the Gospel is a united church. The Church is called to be a united, humble, loving, gentle and non-hypocritical (and thus repentant) people.

Your definition of life determines your partners in life.

- Why do you think unity is so difficult to attain?
- What role do you have in Church unity? How should that change the way that you live?

THERE WILL BE OPPONENTS

Every war and competition has an opponent. Some people will not like unity in the Gospel of Jesus. Unity around Jesus means that we have to call out when someone is acting out of step with the Gospel. This means that often our opponents will be those who are inside the family of God.

Your definition of life determines your opponent in life.

- How does trying to live in unity actually create opposition?
- How can you respond if someone says that you aren't living in step with the Gospel?

A DIFFICULT SALVATION

Difficulty in life reveals your true outlook, order, partners, and opponents. Paul is NOT saying that he will be set free in a physical sense (we know this because he says that he might actually die) but Paul IS saying that this difficulty is in fact saving him! Paul understands that God uses difficult times to draw us closer to Him and to “save us from” a life lived without Him.

Your definition of life determines the ultimate destination for your life.

- When do you most often notice that you do life “without Jesus?”
- How has Jesus used difficult times to draw you closer to Him?
- What can you do currently during this COVID-19 crisis to draw closer to Jesus?
- Pray for the people who are directly impacted by someone who has COVID-19.