



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN | PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21 • •

MAIN POINT

As followers of Jesus Christ, our primary and decisive citizenship is in heaven. Therefore, our identity, conduct, values, and hope should be shaped by the kingdom of God rather than the kingdoms of this world.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When people first meet you, what are some of the things they would likely identify as central to your identity?

What does it mean to belong somewhere?

Have you ever lived, worked, or traveled somewhere that made you feel like an outsider? What contributed to that feeling?

Many Christians struggle to balance their identity as citizens of an earthly nation with their identity as citizens of God's kingdom. Some become disengaged from culture altogether, while others place too much hope in politics, governments, or earthly leaders. Scripture reminds us that while we live on earth, our ultimate citizenship is in heaven. This truth should shape every area of our lives.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21.

What do you think Paul means when he says, "our citizenship is in heaven"?

Why is it important for believers to remember that their primary citizenship is not earthly but heavenly?

Paul reminds believers that their ultimate identity is found in Christ and His kingdom. While earthly citizenship carries certain privileges and responsibilities, it is temporary. The believer's eternal identity is as a citizen of heaven.

How might forgetting our heavenly citizenship affect the way we live?

What earthly identities are Christians sometimes tempted to place above their identity in Christ?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 4:3, EPHESIANS 2:12-13, AND REVELATION 3:5.

What does it mean for a believer's name to be written in the Book of Life?

How does this truth provide confidence and assurance for Christians?

The first mark of a citizen of heaven is that their name is written in heaven's book. Through faith in Christ, believers are brought near to God, adopted into His family, and granted citizenship in His kingdom. This identity is secured not by human achievement but by Christ's finished work on the cross.

How should the assurance of salvation affect the way we live each day?

Why is it dangerous to build our identity primarily around nationality, politics, ethnicity, or other earthly affiliations?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:17.

According to Paul, whose example were believers called to follow?

Why is it important that our behavior reflects the values of God's kingdom?

Paul teaches that citizens of heaven are governed by heaven's laws. Believers are called to imitate Christ and live according to His standards rather than the world's standards. The kingdom of God operates differently than earthly kingdoms, emphasizing humility, service, sacrifice, and obedience to God.

What are some practical ways Christians can live differently from the culture around them?

What kind of "impression" are we leaving on those who observe our lives?

How can our conduct either draw people toward Christ or push them away?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:18-19.

What characteristics describe those whom Paul calls "enemies of the cross"?

Why do you think Paul speaks about them with tears?

Paul contrasts citizens of heaven with those whose minds are set on earthly things. Their priorities, desires, and values are centered on themselves rather than God. Paul grieves because they reject Christ and influence others to do the same.

What are some earthly values that Christians are tempted to adopt?

How can believers guard their hearts from becoming overly focused on earthly things?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ COLOSSIANS 3:1-4.

According to these verses, where should believers set their minds?

What does it practically mean to focus on heavenly values?

Paul encourages believers to put to death sinful actions, put away sinful attitudes, and put on Christlike virtues. Citizens of heaven should increasingly reflect the character of their King.

What heavenly values do you think our culture most needs to see displayed in Christians today?

Which Christlike characteristic do you most want God to strengthen in your life right now?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21.

What hope does Paul give believers in these verses?

How does the promise of Christ's return shape the way we live today?

The final mark of a citizen of heaven is hopeful expectation. Christians live looking forward to the return of King Jesus, who will fully establish His kingdom and transform His people.

Our ultimate hope is not in political leaders, governments, or earthly systems but in Christ alone.

Why is it easy to place too much hope in earthly solutions?

How does remembering Christ's return help us maintain proper perspective?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What identity do you most often find yourself emphasizing besides your identity in Christ?

How well do your daily decisions reflect the values of God's kingdom?

Are there any earthly concerns, political issues, or cultural debates that have become too important in your life?

Which heavenly value (humility, compassion, forgiveness, patience, love, service, etc.) do you need to pursue more intentionally this week?

How can you practically remind yourself that your primary citizenship is in heaven?

Who in your life needs to hear the hope of the gospel and the invitation to become a citizen of God's kingdom?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for rescuing us from the kingdom of darkness and making us citizens of heaven through Jesus Christ. Thank Him that our names are written in the Book of Life and that our future is secure in Him. Pray that our church would live as faithful ambassadors of Christ, displaying the values of His kingdom in every area of life. Ask God to protect us from misplaced hopes and divided loyalties and help us keep our eyes fixed on King Jesus as we await His return.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

Paul reminds believers in Philippi that their Roman citizenship, while valuable, was secondary to their heavenly citizenship. As citizens of heaven, Christians belong first and foremost to the kingdom of God. This identity should shape every aspect of life.

PHILIPPIANS 4:3; EPHESIANS 2:12-13; REVELATION 3:5

The first mark of a citizen of heaven is that their name is written in God's Book of Life. Through faith in Christ, believers are brought near to God and granted citizenship in His eternal kingdom. This citizenship is secure because it rests upon Christ's work rather than human effort.

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-19

Citizens of heaven are governed by heaven's laws and focused on heaven's values. Paul contrasts genuine believers with those whose minds are fixed on earthly things. Christians are called to imitate Christ, live differently from the world, and display kingdom values through their words, attitudes, and actions.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

Citizens of heaven eagerly await the return of their King. Christ alone is the believer's ultimate hope, security, and Savior. While Christians participate responsibly as citizens of earthly nations, their confidence rests in Jesus Christ, who will one day return and make all things new.