

Conversation Starters

- What do you know about the Apostle Paul's life and story?

Discuss

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:1-2, NIV).

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “saint?”

The term saint means: set apart, or holy. Regardless of how you may view yourself, if you are a follower of Christ, you are set apart and justified before God by the work of Christ on the cross.

- Have you ever thought of yourself as a saint?
- How does this make you feel?

Karl Barth put it this way:

“Holy people are unholy people who nevertheless as such have been singled out, claimed, and requisitioned by God for his control, for his use for himself who is holy.”

Though you may not feel holy, God is working in you to make you more like Christ. This is called sanctification. The great promise of a Christ-follower’s sanctification comes from Philippians:

“...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion...” (Philippians 1:6, NIV).

However, this process only begins once you accept Christ as forgiver and leader of your life.

- Have you taken this crucial step?

If you are Christ-follower, you should be growing spiritually. You should be taking steps to partner with God in the work He wants to do in your life. Here are some questions to help you gauge where you are:

- Do you feel close to God?
- Are you comfortable talking about your relationship with God?
- When was the last time you privately worshipped God?
- Are you comfortable spending time alone with God in prayer?

- How do you feel about the sin in your life?
- Are you more like Jesus now than you were a year ago?

God will guide you through the growth process, but you can't just sit back and wait for something to happen.

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me. Yes, I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5, NLT).

Ken Gire made this insightful observation:

“Most of us turned to Christ when we realized there was a difference between Christianity as a religion and Christianity as a relationship. Sometime after entering into that relationship with Christ, we realized something else. That there is a difference between a personal relationship with Christ and an intimate one.”

- Has your relationship with Christ moved from personal to intimate?

Next Steps

- How do you need to partner with God in beginning a good work in your life? (What might you need to start or stop doing to facilitate this happening?)
- Much of our spiritual growth is developed through community and fellowship. What steps are you willing to take to foster that development? (Some ideas to consider: take a Meck Institute [class](#), join a [group](#), sign up to [serve](#), or seek out a mentor.)
- Will you set a time and place to be alone with God and His Word this week?

Pray

Pray these words from Paul for yourself, your group and for the Church around the world:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11, NIV).