

Discussion Guide on Philippians 3:1-11

The following is a suggested discussion guide for you to use with your family, small group, or Sunday Morning Bible Study as we walk through the book of Philippians. Feel free to use what is helpful in this guide to lead you in discussion.

Introduction

Often in high school yearbooks, there was some kind of “senior statistic” section that listed all of the different activities that high school’s seniors might have been involved in over the course of their high school career. What would your senior statistic section have looked like? Were there activities you participated in, or accolades you received, that gave you a lot of pride? (Also, be sure to encourage people in your group to share prayer requests and pray with one another before or after the lesson.)

Video

Watch the video for Philippians 3:1-11, which can be found at www.mbbc.org/home-church.

Discussion

Ask members to share what stood out to them from today’s passage and lesson. Guide discussion by walking back through Philippians 3:1-11 again, having class members read the passage aloud.

Ask the question, **“In Philippians 3:2, Paul introduces some enemies of the gospel who have made their way into the church and are preaching a false gospel. What false gospel are they preaching?”** Explain that they were teaching that you had to be circumcised in order to fully be a part of the church. Ask, **“Why does Paul refute this claim?”** Paul’s point is that, if the gospel becomes the formula of Jesus plus anything (circumcision, etc.) it’s no longer the gospel, and no longer the free gift of salvation by grace through faith. Those who are trusting in Christ alone – they are the circumcision and really are the people of God. They worship by the Spirit of God and they glory in Christ Jesus, putting no confidence in the flesh.

Ask, “As Paul continues his argument, he lays out the reasons he could have confidence in the flesh – his ‘senior statistic’ sheet, so to speak. What do we learn about Paul in his religious resume? What reasons would Paul have for confidence in the flesh?” As Paul looks back to his Jewish heritage, he says, if anyone did it correctly, he did it correctly. Many of us would identify with Paul – we have the right pedigree, experience, and passion.

Ask, “Many of us might identify with Paul – that we have the right degree, experience, and passion. What are the parts of our pedigree that would cause us to have confidence in the flesh?” Some examples that Wayne brought up include church attendance, Bible reading, and giving. While we may not be tempted to say that you must be circumcised to fully be a part of God’s family, are there other cultural things the church has made into “requirements” for faith that are not actually the gospel?

In verse 7 Paul says he counts all of these things as loss. **Ask, “What do you think he means by this – what does it mean to count all of these things as loss?”** If Paul is looking at this and thinking in terms of a ledger, there was

a point in Paul's life where he would have added up all of these things and called them gain – he would have said that he had reason for confidence in the flesh and that he had gained righteousness through his works. But once Paul met Christ, when he added these things up, he came to see that coming to the end of the ledger and adding them up, all of these things were loss – because Paul realized that it is impossible to earn righteousness. The good news of the gospel is that we don't bring anything to the table as it comes to our righteousness and our standing before the Lord – when we come to the Lord, we come to Him admitting that we have no reason for confidence in the flesh, and that our only hope is our faith in what God has done for us in Christ – and thus we receive “alien righteousness.”

Ask, “How does this righteousness, that comes through faith, differ from the righteousness that we might try to earn?” The great thing about this righteousness is that it gives us a real sense of rest and peace in who we are in Christ. If we are always trying to be enough in and of ourselves, if we are always looking for confidence in flesh because of what we have done, we miss out on the hope, joy, and peace that God would have us know in the gospel. This good news resonates with the people who know they have nothing to offer, and the people who think they bring something to the table are offended by the gospel.

There's a freedom that comes when we acknowledge that we don't have our act together, and we don't have any reason for confidence in our flesh – yet, in spite of all of the ways we mess up, God graciously lavishes His love and righteousness on us in Christ.

Point out that, when the gospel came to Paul, it didn't come to him without effect – it doesn't leave us unchanged either. Once we grasp the significance of this good news and the fact that the Lord clothes us in the righteousness of Christ through faith, there is within us a hunger to know the Lord more deeply, to understand the power of the resurrection, and even a willingness to share in His suffering.

Ask people to contemplate this question over the course of the next week: **“How do you approach the Lord – as if you're always trying but never measure up, or as if you are somehow better than others and have earned a righteousness of your own? How does the gospel transform this perspective for you?”**