



First Baptist Church At The Villages

Series: REJOICE! In The Lord • Study Title: The Joy of a Relationship with Christ •
Philippians 3:1-11 • For use by groups 9/22 through 9/28/2019

Main Point

The message of making Christ known matters too much not to share it with others in joy.

Introduction

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

What ideas come into your mind when you think of the word “priority”?

Do you often associate the idea of joy with the word “priority”? Why or why not?

How would you respond to the statement, “Joy is the priority of the Christian life”?

The priority of joy highlights the God-centered nature of the gospel and the Christian faith. We honor most whatever delights us the most. If God is of highest worth and value, then it follows that we enjoy Him above all other things. Joy is thus a worship issue. If we aren't finding joy in God, then we aren't truly worshiping God. Our joy in God—a joy that can exist even in the midst of sorrow—should transcend all other delights in this life.

What should drive us to proclaim the gospel to every sinner we can is not only that they might be spared from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10) but also so that their joy might be full (1 John 1:4; cf. Rom. 15:13). Proclaiming the gospel to our friends, family, acquaintances, and apparent enemies is but the application of the two greatest commandments—to love God and to love your neighbors (Matt. 22:34-40). We love God by finding our joy in Him through how He has revealed Himself in the gospel of His Son. We love our neighbors by extending to them the possibility of finding true and lasting joy in the God who made them through the gospel. Joy is our top priority because worship, the Greatest Commandment, and the Great

Commission are top priorities. The message matters too much not to share it with our friends, family, strangers, and enemies!

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 3:1-11.

Philippians 3 begins with an exhortation to joy (v. 1) following the apostle Paul's call to humble, Christ-like service in chapter 2. Philippians 3:1-11 shows a shift in thought and tone with Paul's warning about false teachers (i.e. Judaizers). The passage can be arranged in three smaller sections: 1) the command to rejoice in the Lord (v. 1), 2) the call to refrain from trusting in the flesh (vv. 2-6), and 3) the confession of Christ's supremacy in all things (vv. 7-11).

Look at verse 1. What stands out to you about the apostle Paul's command to "rejoice"?

Does it seem fair to you to receive an obligation that involves your emotions? Why or why not?

How does the command to rejoice relate to the "protection" of the Philippian believers?

Look at verses 2-6. Why does Paul follow his command for the Philippians to rejoice with a warning about false teaching? How does false teaching deprive us from finding joy in God?

How do the autobiographical details that Paul includes speak against the apparent false teaching and trusting in the flesh?

Look at verses 7-11. What do verses 7-9 tell us about how the gospel radically changes how we view our good works and religious identity?

Why do we need not to have a "righteousness of our own from the law" and instead one that is "through faith in Christ"?

How does verse 8 enhance how all things—not only our religious achievements or good works—are to be considered subservient to knowing Christ and making Him known?

How does the Christian life and experience reflect the pattern of Christ's suffering followed by His resurrection (vv. 10-11)? How does the gospel speak

to our sufferings and to our triumphs?

Application

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

Why should we be concerned, like Paul in verse 1, about our fellow believers' joy in the Lord? What can we draw for ourselves and for others from his intentionality of including this exhortation and concern?

How can we follow Paul's model in verses 4-11 of using personal accomplishment and experience as a way to speak about the gospel and to magnify Christ? Why is it also important to distinguish the gospel's objective truthfulness apart from our personal experience?

Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias stated, "Jesus does not offer to make bad people good but to make dead people alive." How can Paul's denouncement of his own religious heritage in verses 4-9 help us communicate this clearly when we explain the gospel and Christianity to others?

What are some tangible ways that we can pursue the same goal as Paul in seeking to know Christ and the power of His resurrection? If we are truly in Christ, why is it a certainty that we will obtain this goal (see v. 11)? How does this inform the manner in which we deal with disappointment and failure in the meantime?

Pray

Father, may all of our pursuits in life be subordinate to knowing Your Son, Jesus Christ, and the power of His resurrection. Fill us with a joyful zeal to proclaim the gospel so that others might experience the joy that comes exclusively from knowing Christ. In His name, amen.

Commentary

| Philippians 3:1-12

3:1. Paul marked a transition point in his letter with a term that can mean "finally" but often indicates something like "well, then, or furthermore" (v. 1). He is only halfway through his letter at this point. In spite of Paul's difficult circumstances, his relationship with Christ provided him with joy. He encourages us to "rejoice in the Lord." This spirit or attitude of joy permeates this entire letter. Joy comes, however, only as one lives in the Lord. He is joy's only source.

3:2-3. As a father protects his children, Paul wanted to keep his spiritual children from harm (v. 2). He warned them in strong language of opponents who would tempt them to false doctrine. These men were unclean “dogs,” not qualified to enter into spiritual worship. A group of Jews in Paul’s day attempted to distort the gospel by adding the requirement of circumcision plus faith in Christ as necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). Their false way of salvation was evil, as it could cause great confusion to the true message of Christ. They misunderstood the teachings of the Old Testament on circumcision and the Christian gospel of salvation by grace through faith. They wanted to preserve the Jewish heritage at any cost.

In disagreement with the teachings of his opponents, Paul took over their claims as belonging to the church and not to the Jews (v. 3). The opponents claimed to be the true Israel, circumcised in the flesh, being the truly spiritual ones, and glorying in their worship and goodness as measured by obedience to the law. Paul turned the tables. Believers in Christ are the true circumcision (Rom. 9:24-26; Gal. 6:16), having their hearts circumcised. Christians put no confidence in the flesh, neither in the ritual of circumcision, nor in the practice of obeying a law. This stands radically opposed to the false teachers who said Gentiles had to be circumcised to be acceptable to God. The Philipians and modern readers must make the choice—glory in Christ or in human religious achievement. Genuine believers have their complete hope or confidence in Christ’s finished work on our behalf on the cross rather than anything done by them for God or in God’s name. Trusting in anyone or anything besides the true Messiah is foolishness.

3:4-6. If anyone had bragging rights about their status and achievement, Paul did (vv. 4-6), but Jesus showed him that just being Jewish did not make him righteous before God.

3:7-8. While these credentials and accomplishments are impressive, Paul placed no “stock” or confidence in them (vv. 7-8). His relationship with Christ was far superior to his Jewish background. The things of the world—all human accomplishments—are viewed as rubbish or garbage in comparison to gaining Christ. Paul’s focus changed completely. No longer did personal religious ritual and obedient religious acts occupy center stage. All eyes were on Christ and on him alone.

3:9-12. Paul’s description of his desires pointed forward to a goal (v. 12). Not yet mature, he was still very much in the race of the Christian life. The perfection he would have at the future resurrection was not yet attained. He still had to deal with what in Romans 7 he calls “the flesh,” an innate pull to sin. He had to deal with his sinful body and was only too aware of the need for further spiritual growth. He purposes to press on as he had not attained the intense personal knowledge of Christ that he desired and had not become all that Christ wanted him to be. Paul always held God up as the source of every part of the salvation experience.

