

Study 10
“Paul’s Priorities”
Philippians 3:1-16



Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Philippians 3:1-16 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

1. How have you seen God at work in your life over this past week?
2. Sometimes when we engage in particular hobbies or activities, time seems to stand still. We’re able to tune out the world and just immerse ourselves in what we’re doing because of the joy & satisfaction it brings us. What are some of those activities for you? What about it brings you joy?
3. Together as a group consider spending time telling your own life stories, including the high and lows, when and how you began to follow Jesus, and how God has been at work through your entire life. This sort of “life graph” can be an excellent way to get to know each other as well as for you to discern God’s work in the details of your life.

Digging Deeper

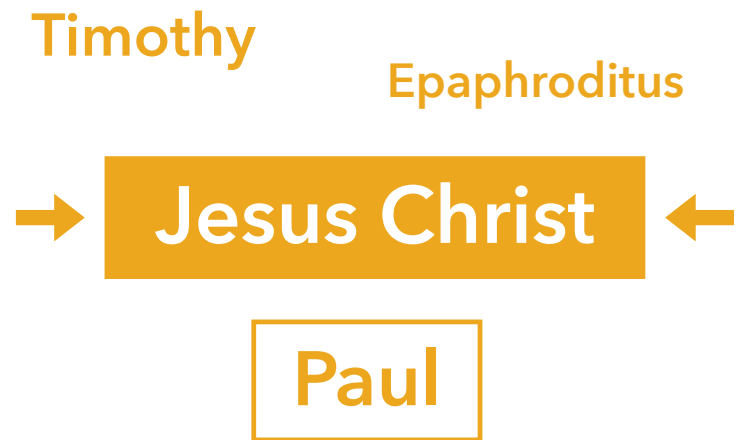
1. This chapter begins with a call “to rejoice in the Lord!” What is Paul asking them to rejoice in? Read the other places in Philippians where Paul uses the same verb to rejoice (1:18; 2:17-18; 2:28; 4:4; 4:10). What are some of the things Paul rejoices or is glad about? What are some ways we can “Rejoice in the Lord always”? (4:4).
2. In 3:2-3, Paul warns about “those who put confidence in the flesh” rather than in Jesus. Who do you think Paul was referring to in this passage? What are some ways we continue to have misplaced confidence in our privileges (advantages we are born with) or accomplishments?
3. In telling his story, Paul considered all his past privileges and accomplishments nothing compared to “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8). (Note that Paul does not say that the things in his past life were of no value; just that in comparison to Jesus they were worthless). Are there things you still value above knowing Jesus?
4. Paul’s “one thing” is pressing on to know Jesus more fully (3:12-14; see also Hebrews 12:1-2). What are some of the ways someone can deepen their relationship with Jesus? What do you think is the role of your brothers and sisters in Christ in encouraging this relationship? (see 3:17)
5. In 3:15-16 Paul says that all who are mature would hold a similar disposition and desire as he does and that at the very least one should live up to what we have already attained. What are some ways we can prevent sliding back into old bad habits and negative patterns of thinking?

Living it Out

1. When Paul is talking about knowing Jesus, he is talking about a deep, transforming, personal relationship with Jesus. Any relationship can have ups and downs. How do you feel about your relationship with Jesus? What are some ways you can “rekindle” your relationship with Jesus?
2. Do you currently have someone you would consider your mentor? Someone who you feel is following Christ faithfully and you can look to for encouragement, support, and guidance? I would encourage you find such a mentor.



Model
Mentor
Exemplar
Paradigm Partner



“Join together in following *my example*, brothers and sisters, and just as you have *us as a model*, keep your eyes on *those who walk as we do*” (3:17).

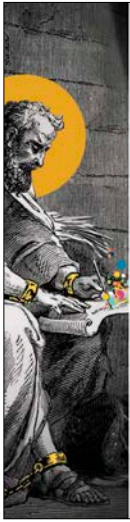
“Follow my example, *insofar as I follow the example of Christ*” (1Corinthians 11:1).

A black and white illustration of a seated man, likely Paul, with a halo, wearing a long robe and sandals, holding a scroll. He is positioned on the left side of the slide. To his right, a large, colorful burst of confetti or small objects is shown against a dark background.

**Paul’s
Privileges,
Passions, and
Priorities**

Philippians 3:1-16

November 17, 2024
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church



Paul's Priorities

Paul's Encouragement & Warning (3:1-4)

Paul's Past Privileges & Passions (3:5-6)

Paul's New Priority: "To know Christ" (3:7-11)

Paul's New Purpose: "One thing I do" (3:12-16)



Paul's Encouragement & Warning

Encouragement to "rejoice in the Lord!" (3:1).

Warning against those who "put confidence in the flesh" (3:3, 4).

- Likely Jewish followers of Jesus who want all followers to adopt Jewish ways in addition to faith in Jesus (Gal 2:11-3:29).



Paul's Encouragement & Warning

"For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (3:3).

- They (both Jewish and Gentile believers) are already full members of God's family.
- The only boasting a Jesus follower can make is in the grace of Jesus the Messiah!



Paul's Past Privileges

"If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews" (3:4-5).

- Benjamin: one of the two tribes faithful to the Davidic line (1Kings 12:21)
- "Hebrew of Hebrews" likely means a pure blood line with a traditional upbringing.



Paul's Past Passions

"in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless" (3:5b-6).

- Pharisee, one of the stricter sects of Judaism.
- Zeal: persecuted the church (Acts 9).
- Right conduct based on the Torah: blameless.



Paul's New Priority

"But whatever were gains to me *I now consider loss* for the sake of Christ" (3:7)

- Paul's past privileges and passions (3:5-6) meant **absolutely nothing** in comparison to knowing Jesus.
- Like Jesus, who did not consider equality with God as something to be held on to (2:6), Paul considered his past privileges and accomplishments as nothing compared to knowing Jesus.



Paul's New Priority

"What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them **crap**, that I may gain Christ" (3:7-8).

- Consider them: nothing > a loss > crap (σκυβαλον *skubalon*).



Paul's New Priority

"Paul's wholesale rejection applies not to the qualities and achievements listed but the *value* he had attached to them. In and of themselves he might now regard them as good, bad, or indifferent... Christ as the supreme gain has become the overriding concern of Paul's life" (Markus Blockmuehl, *Philippians*, 204).



Paul's New Priority

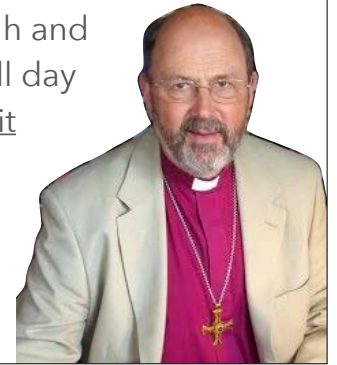
Personal Knowledge of Jesus

- "I want to know Christ" – Paul is talking about a deep, transforming, personal relationship with Jesus.
- "The surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus *my* Lord" (3:8).



Paul's New Priority

"Paul knows his theory through and through. He can expound it all day and, if need be, all night. But it means nothing without the awareness of the person and presence of Jesus himself"
– N.T. Wright



Paul's New Priority

Through knowing Jesus, Paul is granted right standing with God through faith (3:9).

- Includes both the "power of his resurrection" as well as "participation in his sufferings" (3:10).



Paul's New Purpose

"... *But one thing I do*: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:12-13).

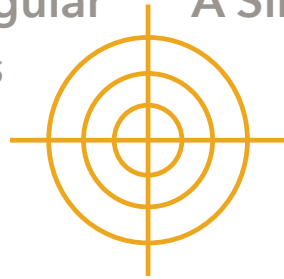
- Paul's "one thing" is pressing on to know Jesus more fully.



Paul's New Purpose

A Singular
Focus

A Singular
Effort



Invitation

If you don't know Jesus...

If you already know Jesus...