

Joy to the World!

Focus on Jesus

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. ²Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved. ³For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more!

⁷I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ

¹⁰I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹¹so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

¹²I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Philippians 3:1-4, 7-8, 10-14

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Which type of person do you more identify with: someone who feels you are not good enough for God, or someone who doesn't need God? How did you overcome that as part of your faith journey?
- Why do you think the church has struggled throughout our history to answer the question, what reconciles our relationship with God?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- What things do we as a culture tend to put our faith in other than God?
- Read Phil 3:5-6. Paul lists his resume for putting confidence in his own efforts to be right with God. Many of those things are good things, so why does he call them all worthless and garbage in verse 7 & 8?
- Many Christians want to know Christ without experiencing the suffering of Jesus, some even teach that suffering is a sign that something is wrong with you (not enough faith, unconfessed sin, etc.). Is that even possible? Why or why not?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- How can we guard against relying on our own efforts to be religious and a good person as the basis of being right with God?
- How could living out Philippians 5:13-14 set people free to love God and experience true Joy?
- Have you ever experienced true Joy simply by being religious? How has focusing on Jesus instead of being religious helped you experience Joy?

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

Father, thank you that we can come to you not based on our own efforts or our own merit, but because of what Jesus did for us. Help us to have the same desire as Paul, to know you and not simply be religious. In Jesus' name, amen.