



Philippians Group Discussion Guide Week 7

The guide follows the same format: three questions followed by prayer. My additional questions are in italics. Please especially make sure you consider the application questions I ask. Have a great study!

Read Philippians 3:1-16.

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. 2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

What does the text say? In this section we are seeking to make as many observations as we can. I encourage you to mark up the text above you (underline, circle, draw lines connecting verses/words, write short comments, etc).

- Summarize the context...what was said in the preceding verses? How does this fit within Paul's thought process?
- What are key words/phrases in the passage?
 - What are the repeated words/phrases? Why are they significant?
 - What are important connecting words and how do they help us understand Paul's point?
 - What themes or ideas are being emphasized?
 - What does this passage say about God? Man? Sin?
 - What questions do you have?
- Some other questions to help discover what the text says:
 - *Paul uses the words "joy" and "rejoice" many times in Philippians. Read Philippians 1:4,18. 2:2,17. 3:1. 4:1,4,10. What are Paul's reasons for joy?*
 - *Paul says he is seeking to "safeguard" their joy. How does what he tells them safeguard their joy?*
 - *Why does Paul refer to people as "dogs"? Look at how the Bible speaks of dogs: Proverbs 26:11, 2 Peter 2:22 and Psalm 22:16. Do not think domesticated house pet but wild scavengers. Who are the "dogs" (evildoers) that Paul is referring to? What is their error (what does it mean that they mutilate the flesh)? How are they teaching a different way of salvation (a salvation by works and personal merit...it says they have confidence in the flesh in verse 3)? How does Paul contrast them with those who are really in Christ?*
 - *In verse 3, Paul states four traits of a true Christian. What are they? Note the following two traits and explain what they mean: "we are the circumcision" (See Rom. 2:28-29, Gal. 3:7, Col. 2:11-14) and "worship God in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:26-27, 12:1, Phil. 2:17, Heb. 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:9)*
 - *What is Paul's point in verses 4-6? What are Paul's fleshly credentials that gave him reason to boast?*
 - *Despite his credentials and reasons for boasting, he says he counts those things as loss now. Read verses 7-8 and Galatians 1:14. How does Paul see the value of knowing Jesus versus everything else?*
 - *Where did Paul find his righteousness in the past? What does it mean to have a righteousness by faith?*
 - *Discuss the contrast Paul is giving (he used to have earthly credentials and accolades but now he has suffering and has lost all things because of following Jesus but its worth it because of the value of Christ).*
 - *If Paul already has a righteousness by faith and he already knows Jesus (verse 8) then why does he now speak in verse 10 of wanting to "know Jesus"? Why does he speak of attaining the resurrection from the dead? Paul uses this language of pressing on and straining forward. What is he straining towards? What is the goal or destiny that he is living for? **In effect, in verses 4 through 11 Paul says, "When I saw the value of Christ and when I saw that salvation was only in Christ, I took everything that once was gained and counted it loss and I abandoned it all for Christ." It is possible that after saying that salvation is through faith that people may assume that he is saying he has reached a place of perfection. And Paul is correcting that thinking. Yes, we are righteous through faith in Christ, as 3:9 indicates. But our experience has not yet reached the level of our status. Yes, we***

know Christ as being of surpassing and superior excellence, as vv. 8, 10 make clear, but our knowledge has not yet reached the depths and heights of what will happen when we finally stand in Christ's presence in the age to come. So we press on and strain toward this day of when we will see Jesus Christ and be completely transformed. The destiny that Paul is living towards is knowing Jesus fully.

What does the text mean?

- Describe Paul's main point in a sentence or couple sentences. What is the big/main idea?
- What are some of the subpoints? Summarize Paul's thought process and some of his supporting points.
- What other passages could be helpful in understanding this text better?

How do I/we apply this passage?

- What are we to think/feel/do?
- What sins does this passage expose in you/us?
- *Do you realize that there are doctrines and people and circumstances that threaten your joy in Christ? What are some of those things?*
- *Paul used to put his confidence in his performance. What are you tempted to put your confidence in?*
- *Do you struggle to give up something to follow Jesus?*
- *What value do you place upon knowing Christ? How is this reflected in your personal Bible study time, prayer, and service?*
- *What are some things from your past that you need to forget? How can you now move forward to what lies ahead?*
- *Paul wants us to rejoice even in suffering. Why? How can we prepare to rejoice in conflict and suffering?*
- *Is your life marked by straining and pressing forward? What would that look like?*

Pray

- What is there to praise God for from this passage?
- What sin(s) is there to confess?
- What is there to ask God for?