

Stripped Away
Philippians 1:1-11
Small Group Discussion Guide

OPENING QUESTION (get everyone involved in discussion):

- What are a couple things about you that define who you are? You can mention tastes, hobbies, personality, etc.

TRANSITION: We're in a series called "Stripped Away." Paul wrote a letter to the church at Philippi. Several events have prompted him to write this letter to them: their external opposition (unclear what it was), causing them suffering; internal conflict. But the other event is Paul's own set of circumstances. It's the year 62, and nearly everything has been stripped away from him. He is imprisoned in Rome, awaiting trial before the Emperor. That trial could result in his being executed.

Today we're going to look at Philippians 1:1-11 to answer the question "Who am I when everything else is stripped away? **READ PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11**

- In verses 3-5, Paul discusses how his "partnership in the gospel" with the Philippians brings him joy.
 - Get into pairs. How would you explain the gospel in 60 seconds?
 - In the group: Someone you know and love will die tonight and has asked that you explain the gospel to them. What are some key ingredients that you don't want to forget?
 - What then is "partnership in the gospel" and how might it bring you joy?
 - Do you have these relationships, oriented around partnership in the gospel? If yes, share about some of them. How do they encourage you? If not, how might one cultivate them?
- Paul says in verse 6: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
 - What do you think Paul is saying? (What is "the day of Christ Jesus"? What is this "good work" that God is doing in us?)
 - Share at your own level of comfort: Are any of you discouraged about the present state of your life? (You may think, how could anything good be happening here, with this situation? How could God do anything good with me when I keep messing up in this way?)
 - How might this reminder in v. 6 encourage you in your circumstances?
 - Paul will call us often in this letter to be joyful (for example, in 4:4).
 - First, what is joy? How would you define it?
 - Second, for those who are discouraged or suffering, how can you be sorrowful and joyful at the same time? (Note: it is OK to be sorrowful. Jesus says in Matt. 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.")
 - How might focusing on the completed work within you on "the day of Christ" be one way to bring you joy in the present?
 - We are people of the future. What happens to our lives when we live in forgetfulness of this truth? Conversely, how can this reality bleed into our present circumstance?

- In verses 9-11, what does it mean to “be filled with the fruit of righteousness”?
 - Does that describe your life in the present? If not, how could it be the case?
 - In v. 11, we read that this righteousness “comes through Jesus Christ.” How does reflecting on the gift of righteousness, given to us by Jesus, produce fruit in our lives today?
 - How and what effect should this have on our joy and general Christian outlook?
 - If you are struggling to find joy in the midst of discouragement or suffering, how may we help and pray for you?

PRAYER:

- Among our prayer requests, let us pray to “live the life of the future in the present.” And let us especially pray for those who have had crucial things stripped away, who are discouraged or suffering.