**Small Group Study**

**“Discovering a Treasure of Infinite Worth”**

**Philippians 3:1-11**

###### LESSON OBJECTIVES

* **Big idea:** I want them to understand that *there is no greater treasure than Christ*.
* **Problem:** I want them to see their default “prizing” is often in what will rot, disappoint, or be taken away; *we naturally treasure anything but Christ*.
* **Solution:** I want them to see *Christ as* *their all-sufficient treasure* in which they delight.
* **Response:** I want them to *identify* what they are tempted to prize more than Christ, *turn* from these idols and *embrace* Christ in a deeper way.

###### LAUNCH

* Imagine for one week if someone who knew little or nothing about Christianity was to follow us around and watch the ways we express our Christian faith. If, after a week, we were to ask this person, “What do you think the Christian life is all about?,” what might he (she) say? If his sentence began, “The Christian life is about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,” how might he fill in the blank?

Tonight we are going to look at a passage in which the Apostle Paul reminds us what the Christian life is all about.

###### EXPLORE

Survey the Big Picture: Philippians is one of Paul’s most personal letters. He wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome. The Christians in Philippi (whom he had not seen for many years) sent him a financial gift during his imprisonment (cf. 4:10-20). Paul wrote this letter back to express his appreciation and encourage them in their Christian faith. In 3:1-11 Paul describes how he found in Jesus Christ a treasure of infinite worth that made his past accomplishments seem like rubbish.

Explore the Passage [*You might read the whole passage aloud before you investigate the individual sections*]

Read 3:1-3

* How would you describe Paul’s tone in these verses (especially in light of v.2)? What concerns led Paul to use such strong language?
* In v. 2 Paul refers to certain Jews as “dogs.” It appears that these individuals wanted to put Christians back under the Law of Moses. What made these “dogs” so dangerous? [*Be sure to encourage your participants to look at the end of v. 3 and the end of v.4 The “dogs” to whom Paul refers appear to be “Judaizers” (similar to the problem in Galatians) who were attempting to put believers back under the law. “Circumcision” was the defining mark for them of embracing the law. To learn more about the historical background of this problem, you may want to consult a commentary. In vv.3-4 it is clear that their central problem as “putting confidence in the flesh.”* ]
* The other group to which Paul refers is the “true circumcision”? How does he describe them? [*Make they see the positive characteristics—“worshipping by the Spirit of God and glorying in Christ”—as well as the negative characteristic—“not putting confidence in the flesh.” These two characteristics frame the rest of the passage. In vv. 4-6, Paul describes what it looks like to place confidence in the flesh. In vv.7-11 he describes what it means for them to glory in Christ*.]

Read 3:4-6

* What does Paul mean when he speaks of “putting confidence in the flesh”? How does “putting confidence in the flesh” relate to the “dogs” to whom Paul refers earlier? How can this problem be seen in Paul’s own life prior to Christ?
* Why is “placing confidence in the flesh” so problematic? What does this tendency reveal about our fallen condition?

Read 3:7-11

* Why did Paul regard his previous religious accomplishments as “dung”? [*Make sure they see the strong language Paul uses.*]
* What did Paul discover in Christ that was infinitely more valuable than anything he previously possessed? [*This represents one of the keys to understanding this passage. You might want to spend some extra time on this question*.]
* In v.3 Paul claims that one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian “glorying in Christ Jesus.” In light of vv.7-11, what does it look like to “glory in Christ”?
* How would you summarize Paul’s understanding of the “gospel” in light of vv. 7-11?

Discover the Big Idea:

* What did Paul want to make sure these believers understood about the Christian life by telling his story?

Summary statement (ABI): Paul wants them to see that Christ is infinitely more valuable than any treasure they could possess. Compared to what we have in Him, everything else in the whole world is “dung.”

###### APPLY

* Think back to the opening question. If someone were to follow you around for a week, what might they conclude the Christian life was about from watching you? How does this passage challenge you to reorient your life? How are you tempted to center your life on something other than Christ? (FCF)
* Paul discovered that all the things he deeply treasured were rubbish compared to knowing Christ. What are you tempted to treasure more than Christ? (FCF)
* Is Christ most often an “end”—the object of your enthrallment and interest—or is Christ a “means”—someone who is pursued to get you something else? Why is this the case? (RS/FCF)
* What is it that is uniquely beautiful about Christ and his redemptive work for you which, if you fully embraced it, would lead you to treasure Christ in the way Paul describes? (RS/LA)