

First Things First Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What's something over the last week that has made you smile?
2. What's one of your favorite movies?

Read the following passage: Read Philippians 3:1-14.

Although Jews knew that they didn't become God's chosen people because they were more righteous than other nations (see, for example, Deuteronomy 9:4-6), in practice, many Jewish people practically shifted their confidence to their own commitment to the Law of Moses. The Law became the means by which Jews distinguished themselves from "sinful Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15) and the standard by which they measured their own righteousness before God. Paul eventually came to realize that the Law couldn't make his heart right, and that a truly righteous standing before God could only be his if it was given to him as a gift. (Romans 5:17; 6:23) Once he realized this, he understood that the things he was previously so proud of (his ancestry, religious training, and zeal for the Law) were actually functioning as barriers to receiving the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ. In fact, if Paul's peers respected him for his religious devotion to the Law, it was probably tempting to substitute approval from men for approval from God. (Galatians 1:10)

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What does Paul mean by putting "confidence in the flesh?" (3:3) How might we put confidence in the flesh?
2. Where do you think you are prone to look for validation from your peers? How does this connect with the important concept of justification by faith? Why is being justified in God's eyes important for living in joy?
3. When it comes to living in lasting joy, why is following God more important than following our feelings? Why is this often difficult in practice?
4. Read Philippians 4:1-4, 10-13. What does it mean to be and to live "in the Lord"? How does this relate to joy?
5. In Philippians 3 Paul emphasizes how much he wants to know Christ. How can this practically be our pursuit when we have school or jobs or families that we are responsible for? Rate your current desire for Christ on a scale of 1 to 10. (Try to be

honest!) Explain your answer.

Pray