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“Supreme Confidence”

Philippians 3 Small Group Plan

Everything you add to the truth subtracts from the truth.
— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn —

*I once thought these things were valuable,
but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*
— Philippians 3:8 (NLT) —

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Do you agree with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn? Explain.
- Where does the concept of “value” come from?
- Why would I think of something as valuable at one point in my life, but not consider it valuable at another point in my life?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THE BEGINNINGS OF ARROGANCE —

Philippians 3:1-4a

¹ Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. ² Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh — ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

- Paul repeats himself. He writes “the same things” as “a safeguard” (v. 1). Why is redundancy good? Why is it good to rehearse spiritual truth?
- How can Paul rejoice while in prison?
- What does “confidence in the flesh” mean? In terms of status, education, reputation, what does it look like? How does it show itself today?
- People have approached God in basically two ways: (1) the performance model, and (2) the grace model. How do they differ?

— THE FUEL FOR ARROGANCE —

PHILIPPIANS 3:4B-7

⁴ If someone else thinks they have reasons to put 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; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

- As Paul lists his religious accomplishments, how would we translate them into our own religious terms?
- Why Does Paul says he counts all his accomplishments as a “loss”?
- Why is he being so hard on himself? Do you think he is he going overboard? Explain.

— THE ALTERNATIVE TO ARROGANCE —

Philippians 3:8-11

⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ — yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

- Describe the difference between “a righteousness of my own” and “the righteousness that comes from God” (v. 9).
- Why does Paul use such strong language — “garbage” — to contrast what **we** do with what **Jesus** has done for us?
- What is the difference between knowing **about** Jesus and actually **knowing** Jesus?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- What does the phrase “rejoice in the Lord” mean to you?
- Why is it easy to trust, or even boast, in our own goodness and accomplishments?

- What does it look like when we live sacrificial lives, that involve denying ourselves and taking up our cross?
- What can keep us from taking pride in our Christian “work-ethic”?
- If someone says to you, “I want to really come to know Christ” what advice would you give to him or her?
- What do you say to a Christian who asks, “How can I move away from feeling arrogant about my own religious accomplishments?”
- Close by thanking God for the example of Jesus, Paul and others significant Christians in your life. Ask Him for courage to be His example for others.