

Philippians Chapter 3 (Material taken from N. T. Wright's Study on Philippians for Small Groups)

Opening Question

- Name a group or organisation that you are part of. How does that group define "membership"?

Verses 1-6: Ask someone to read these verses out loud

Ask people to share something that stands out for them

Paul was warning the church in Philippi about an issue that had also come up in the church in Galatia regarding those demanding for the circumcision of non-Jewish Christians. However, the coming of the Messiah fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy around the new covenant and that our status as the People of God is now in Jesus' death and resurrection and not through circumcision.

"Paul's claim is [that] God has acted in Jesus as Messiah and the death and resurrection of Jesus has transformed what it means to be the people of God." (N. T. Wright)

The definition of who we are as God's chosen people is entirely contained within the person of Jesus Christ, and no longer through any outward physical sign of our commitment to God, ie circumcision.

Question & Application:

- Where in your life are you tempted to define yourself by something other than Jesus?

Verses 7-11: Ask someone to read these verses out loud

Ask people to share something that stands out for them

Everything is turned back to front and inside out as the result of a crucified Messiah. Cultural values for status and recognition no longer matter in the Kingdom. Knowing Jesus is worth more than anything else.

Question & Application:

- What do you need to "count as loss" in order to grow in your friendship with Jesus?

Verses 12-16: Ask someone to read these verses out loud

Ask people to share something that stands out for them

Again here, Paul is encouraging us to learn to think for ourselves what it means to be Messiah-people. Working out what to do with ourselves living life in the in-between time of coming to faith in Jesus and moving to Heaven.

Question & Application:

- What are some things we can do as a group to help one another attain to the goal of Christlikeness?

Verses 17- ch 4v1: Ask someone to read these verses out loud

Ask people to share something that stands out for them

Verses 17 - 19 is another warning from Paul about how not to live. There is a new way of life through Jesus. He again encourages us to re-think our lives through a Messianic-mind.

Question & Application:

Where are some places right now where you feel your faith is in conflict with what the world considers ordinary? What might Christ be calling you to?