

Community Group Discussion Questions
"Never a Boring Testimony" Philippians 3:4-14 Nov 18/19

Getting Started

Your testimony is the story of your past colliding with your future leading you to make a decision for the present. This decision is to understand that everything you thought brought you gain, was loss, and what you thought was a loss, in Jesus was the ultimate gain. (Jesus + 0 = Everything)

If you are a Christian, think back over your life and share with us what you used to glory in. What did you own, do, think, or have that made you feel significant or successful? (possible answers: popularity, athletic ability, smarts, looks, money, accomplishments, career, beautiful family, sense of humor...)

If you're not yet a Christian, where do you find your significance?

How would you feel if that source was taken away from you through an accident, health crisis, or financial setback?

Going Deeper

Paul's Testimony is shared from two perspectives: Accountant & Athlete!

I. Perspective of an Accountant: Takes Inventory

A. My Past: My Loss

Noble Birth: Affirmation (Vs. 5)

- Circumcised on the 8th day: Distinct mark of Jewish nation
- Of the Nation of Israel: Not a convert to Judaism.
- Tribe of Benjamin: Youngest son of Jacob.

The Apostle Paul had an amazing spiritual background. However, just like him, we can develop a false pride because of who our ancestors were or what our ancestors accomplished. Spiritually, many people feel like they

are religious or spiritual because they come from a religious or spiritual heritage (their family's faith through the generations.) However, God doesn't have any grandchildren! No matter what our parents or grandparents believed, each of us has to come to Jesus as an individual, making our own declaration of faith and surrender.

Read John 1:12-13. Have you received and believed in Jesus? When were you spiritually born again?

Noble Belief: Accolades (Vs. 6)

- Hebrew of Hebrews: Not a Hellenistic Jew.
- Pharisee: To be separate, and an expert in the law.
- Persecutor of the Church: Zealous to put an end to Christianity.
- Blameless: Obedient to the Law

The Apostle Paul had a phenomenal spiritual resume'. He could not only brag on what his heritage had been, he could also brag on what he had done with his own life. According to what he believed, he had pushed himself to a place of spiritual excellence. He had perfected the religious game.

What kinds of things have you or others done to practice religion, or try to make yourself perfect in God's eyes by your own effort?

READ Ephesians 2:8-9. What does God say about people who try to earn their way into religious perfection?

B. My Present: My Gain

New Birth: Assurance (Vs. 7-8)

- Change in Purpose: "Sake of Christ" (7)
- Change in Pursuit: "Knowing Christ" (8)
- Change in Passion: "Gain Christ" (8)

Three times in these verses, Paul says that everything he used to take pride in and glory in has become 'loss' to him. It did not add an value to his life. In fact, he uses a very strong word, 'rubbish', to describe all of his old accomplishments. 'Rubbish' is a word that is translated as waste products, like the leftovers you scrape down the garbage disposal, or a losing lottery ticket, or in some cases, even the waste products you flush down the toilet.

What a reversal! He goes from bragging on all that he used to glory in, to saying it's all a loss, and a loss worthy of being tossed away or flushed.

What matters to Paul now? What does he consider to be a gain? Have you come to this same conclusion? If so, tell us the thoughts and emotions you went through to make this decision...

New Belief: Acceptance (Vs. 9-11)

- Imputed Righteousness: "found in Him" (9)
- Intimate Relationship: "know Him" (10)

Paul has replaced a performance-based religion for a personal relationship with Jesus. How would you define 'faith' in Jesus?

II. Prerequisite of an Athlete: Takes Initiative

- Proper Awareness: "not...obtained...or am already perfect" (12)
- Persistent Effort: "press on" (12)
- Pointed Concentration: "forgetting what lies behind" (13)
- Pure Motivation: "prize...the upward call of God" (14)

Here you see Paul reminding you of what he already said in 2:12-13. We have salvation because of what Jesus did for us, but we are to work it out, press on toward the prize, and forget the old things that we used to glory in. What is this process looking like in your life right now?

Take Away: Live your life every day TAKING INVENTORY of what is truly lasting GAIN and TAKE INTIATIVE to make your life count!

Prayer Requests