

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Hebrews 12:2

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship.)

As we prepare for Easter, let's spend some time reflecting on what Jesus went through leading up to His crucifixion. Read Hebrews 12:2 and then spend some time in prayer thinking about Jesus' life. Think about how Jesus was mocked and humiliated by people. Think about how He patiently ministered to his disciples even when they just didn't get it. Think about how He was constantly in conversations with the Pharisees who were trying to trap Him in His words. Think about when He was betrayed by His own disciple Judas. Think about the physical pain He endured on the cross, the nails, the crown of thorns. Think about what Christ endured so that we could be forgiven. Thank God that He sent His son to save us.

Icebreaker

What is the one thing in your life that you are most proud of?

Text for Discussion: Philippians 3:4-12

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

What is most precious to us? If Jesus is indeed Christ, then anything we choose to put above Him is distracting us, leading us away from what is truly most precious. *Especially* if these are good things. Compared to Christ's surpassing worth, everything else is a liability because none of it will last. At PCC, we therefore seek to be creating people who love Jesus above all else, because He is better.

Why does mission need to be a priority for us? Jesus' life was a living picture of the welcoming grace of God, entering into the most degraded corners of the world in search of the lost. He desired and sought out the company of broken, shameful people and gave them hope. No wonder people flocked to Him! Today, we are called to be the bearers of that message.

Why is mission something we often avoid?

A lack of hope for others. We mistakenly think certain people will never follow Christ, as if there's a certain type who can become a Christian. But there is no type. We forget the miracle that we ever came to faith. *Every* human was created to know God's love for them in Christ (Col 1:16).

A lack of urgency. Is it really necessary to know Jesus? The Bible is clear that God's love extends to all people everywhere (John 3:16), that He desires for all to be saved, that Jesus is the one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:4-5), and that Christ is the necessary means of salvation (Acts 4:12). We must therefore follow Christ's command to "Go and make disciples of all nations," (Matt 28:18).

A lack of integrity in our own spiritual vitality. If our own lives are not marked by the joy of knowing Christ, how can we expect others to want what we've got?

How do we live a life of public faith? We can picture it by thinking of a series of concentric circles with knowing and loving Christ at its center:

Outer Circle: Authentic relationships marked by intentionality. Knowledge is important in coming to know Christ, but relationships matter more – marked by listening and caring, without an agenda.

1: Conversational Salt (Col 4:6). Without responding ourselves (unless pressed to), we can ask deeper questions: *Do you consider yourself a spiritual person? What do you think about God?*

2: Hospitality. It was essential to the early church and should be in Los Angeles, where people are starved for community. It's amazing how food opens doors of intimacy and connection.

3: Christianity at work. Invite people into spaces where they can see Christianity in a positive light.

4: Christianity in dialogue. This isn't a debate or presenting Christianity from a higher moral ground. It's an exchange of ideas where people are equally empowered to speak.

5: Christianity presented. Give a friend a resource like a book or a podcast.

6: Christianity modeled. Invite a friend to your CG or a worship service. One of the most compelling reasons for belief is to observe a community of believers.

7: Christianity in process. Invite them to a group that processes Christianity, like a Life Explored Group.

8: Drawing the Net. When someone gives their life to Christ, it's a miracle. It's God's work, but as Jesus told His disciples, it's our responsibility to fish. "Drawing the Net" is when we ask, *Do you want to follow Christ?* When to ask this is a matter of discernment, but it's a question we shouldn't be afraid to ask. We should never be ashamed of Christ.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How do we overcome concerns about sharing our faith?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

Looking at the issues...

Looking at Philippians 3:3-12

- What does confidence in the flesh mean?
 - Are there areas in your life where you are putting confidence in the flesh?
- In vs. 7-9, why does Paul ultimately consider his prior accomplishments of such little value?
 - Specifically, what do all of these things fail to provide?
- Looking at 2 Corinth 5:21, how did Paul eventually experience what his accomplishments couldn't provide?
- Last week Rankin talked about three things that keep us from sharing our faith and this week he continued with 3 more. Below we will examine them.
 - Lacking hope that someone would come to Christ.
 - Is this an issue for you?
 - Rank it from 1-10, 10 being the highest/most dramatic as it relates to you. Then discuss why you chose the number you did...
 - Not having a sense of urgency.
 - Is this an issue for you?
 - Rank it from 1-10, 10 being the highest/most dramatic as it relates to you. Then discuss why you chose the number you did...
 - Lacking joy in our own spiritual lives.
 - Is this an issue for you?
 - Rank it from 1-10, 10 being the highest/most dramatic as it relates to you. Then discuss why you chose the number you did...
- Are there any other things that keep you from sharing your faith that weren't mentioned?

Application Questions

- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you to have more hope in the gospel *this week*?
- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you have a sense of urgency *this week*?
- What spiritual discipline could you engage in that would help you to have more joy in the gospel *this week*?

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

- Engage in one new spiritual discipline this week based on your answers to the questions above.
 - Come to CG next week ready to discuss the impact the discipline had on you during the week.
- As we prepare for Easter this week, begin praying for one person to know Jesus, one person to invite to the Easter service and one person who you can do a secret act of service for.
 - Come to CG next week ready to discuss how it impacted you.