

Week 4: The Work that Defines Us

Overview: Identity is not based on what we achieve, but on Who we know. Righteousness comes by faith – and identity is rooted in Christ alone.

Key Scripture: Philippians 3:7-14

Supporting Scripture:

CONTENT

Key Takeaway: Your identity is not in what you do – it's in who you belong to.

Chapter 3 Overview: Philippians emphasizes joy, unity, humility, and confidence in Christ – not in personal achievement. Paul uses his own life as a testimony of what really matters. In Philippians 3, Paul warns against placing confidence in religious performance. He then lists his own accomplishments and calls them “garbage” compared to knowing Christ. This section we’re studying today highlights: Paul’s old identity (achievements, background, status), his new identity (found in Christ alone), the righteousness that comes only through faith, and pressing on toward God’s calling. Essentially, Paul redefines success, identity, and purpose.

Key Points

- Definitions
 - Righteousness: being counted “right with God” because of Jesus – not because of our performance
 - Difference between righteousness and justification:
 - Justification is your legal standing. Righteousness is your new identity. BOTH are gifts of grace.
 - Justification: the moment God declares you right with Him – it happens once, the moment you trust Jesus. It’s God’s “legal verdict”
 - Righteousness: the new status and identity you receive because of this declaration.
 - It describes who you are now in God’s eyes.
 - Identity in Christ: who God says you are because of Jesus; identity in Christ means who Jesus is becomes more defining than what you do or what others think about you.
 - You can’t earn righteousness (vv7-9)
 - Christianity is not behavior modification – it’s heart transformation
 - Paul throws all his achievements in the trash, compared to knowing Christ. Performance culture dominates high school – grades, sports, looks, accomplishments, talents, etc. But none of that makes us right with God.

- Working harder doesn't make you right with God – faith in Jesus does.
- Application:
 - What false identity do you hold? (grades, athletics, friend groups, etc.). What would happen if you stopped trying to earn value, and instead lived from value? (knowing you are God's).
- Knowing Christ is better than anything else (vv 10-11)
 - Paul's entire life goal becomes one thing: knowing Jesus more. Students need to see that following Jesus isn't boring – it's life giving.
 - Paul says everything he once bragged about is garbage compared to Jesus
 - What competes with Jesus for your attention?
- Press on toward the goal (vv12-14)
 - Our growth is like a race – not perfect but moving forward. Students need to know failure is not final – Jesus calls us forward.
 - Following Jesus is a lifelong race. We move forward, even when it's hard.

Gospel Application: Righteousness is a gift. Jesus gives us His perfect record so we can stand confident before God. Our identity is based on Jesus' perfect record, not our achievements.

Key Question: What is one part of your identity that needs to be rooted more deeply in Christ?

APPLICATION

Activity Suggestions

- Open up your Bibles and read Philippians 3:7-14 together.
- As a group, research some identity statements that God gives us. Where in scripture are these? Look them up and encourage each other in our identity, emphasizing that it is found in Jesus and not our achievements.
- Take a moment to have students pray in groups of 2. What false identities does your partner hold? Pray that their identity would only be found in Christ. Pray that they would press forward in Christ.

Community Group Questions

- What has God been teaching you this week?
- Have 3 students define righteousness and justification in their own words.
- What times have you viewed Christianity as behavior modification instead of heart transformation?
- How can you reframe failure as a redirection that helps you move forward, rather than seeing it as “final?”