

LESSON 69

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

PHILIPPIANS 3:3-21



BIBLE TRUTH

ALL OUR RELIGIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE NOTHING
COMPARED WITH KNOWING CHRIST

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Philippians 3:3–21 from the Scriptures or read story 147, “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Listing Accomplishments

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pens or pencils

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Rubbish

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ leftovers from a recent meal (e.g., a chicken carcass) placed in a foil pan with a foil cover
- ✓ a snack like pretzels—enough for the class
- ✓ plates

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Running for the Prize

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

List Paul's Accomplishments

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ a bag of candy-coated chocolates
- ✓ a large candy bar
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

TOTAL 70 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

All religious works are worthless apart from Christ—Paul had every reason to boast about his religious accomplishments. Not only was he born a Jew, but he also followed the law given by God almost perfectly (Philippians 3:6). He was so full of zeal that he persecuted Christians, who he believed threatened to undermine the Jewish traditions given by God. But once God opened Paul’s eyes, he saw his sin and how worthless his works were to save him. Paul gladly gave up trusting in his accomplishments to trust in what Jesus had accomplished for him. Paul walked away from his occupation as a Jewish religious leader on the spot. He stopped trusting in his heritage as a Jew and turned to trust in Jesus. Instead of being an instructor of legalism, Paul became an instructor of grace!

All accomplishments are rubbish compared with gaining Christ—Paul didn’t stop with his religious works. He went on to say that he considered everything a loss compared with knowing Jesus (Philippians 3:8). Often we find our identity in our gifts, knowledge, or accomplishments. If a person is a good football player, for instance, he might be tempted to think he is something special because of his ability to play well. Paul realized that boasting in anything but Christ is sinful. It is not that our gifts, talents, or accomplishments are bad, but they should not define us. Compared with Christ, Paul tells us they are rubbish. The word for “rubbish” means the scraps thrown to the dogs at the end of a feast.

All of our future is defined by pursuing Christ—Paul’s greatest desire was to know Jesus more fully (Philippians 3:10). He abandoned trusting in his accomplishments and pressed on to trust in Christ. Paul no longer lived for this world and its treasures and glory. He set his sights on heaven and living with Jesus (Philippians 3:14). Like Paul, we too should set our sights on living in heaven with Christ (Philippians 3:17). When we live for Christ, earthly accomplishments and treasures do not easily tempt us. Although Paul longed to live a life completely dedicated to loving Jesus, he was quick to remind us that he was not perfect (Philippians 3:12). Like us, he still struggled with sin. Even so, Paul pressed on to know Christ, realizing that one day he would see Jesus.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Legalistic Righteousness

When Paul writes about righteousness under the law (Philippians 3:6) he is referring to obedience to the many laws written to determine righteousness. The Pharisees added even more laws to the law God gave Moses to ensure that a person could remain righteous. For example, there were laws about how far a person could travel on the Sabbath so as to make sure he was not working. The Pharisees prided themselves on keeping all the laws that were added to the law of Moses. Someone who could keep all the laws would be without fault.

Jesus exploded the myth of attaining righteousness by the law when he explained that even sin in our hearts disqualifies us before God. For example, anger in our hearts toward a brother breaks the law prohibiting murder.

Christ was the only one to ever keep the law perfectly, both outwardly and in his heart. Though he was tempted, Jesus did not sin. Paul came to realize that all his efforts to be righteous were worthless. In Christ, however, Paul was given righteousness freely by grace. In the end, he pursued Christ with an even greater zeal than he ever had the law.

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Rather than complain at the end of his days, Paul saw his own struggle through the lens of the gospel. Knowing that Jesus suffered in his mission to live a righteous life, Paul realized he too would have to suffer in following Jesus. When we consider that the world of sin and the enemy opposed Jesus on his way to the cross, we should not be surprised when we find persecution and suffering in our lives as well. Jesus said, "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

In thinking about his suffering, Paul identified with the suffering of Christ upon the cross (Philippians 3:10). Paul saw his suffering for the gospel as following Jesus in some small way and counted it a privilege to suffer for the cause of the one who gave his life for him. We, like Paul, should not be surprised at suffering. It is a part of the path of every Christian—some certainly greater than others.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Philippians 3:3–21 from the Scriptures or read story 147, “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Listing Accomplishments

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pens or pencils

At the start of class, distribute paper and pens or pencils and ask the students to list their accomplishments on the left side of their paper. Next to each one, ask them to rate how valuable they think that accomplishment is (of little value, of great value, or of extremely great value). Give them a few examples: Learning how to ride a two-wheel bike, finishing fourth grade, babysitting someone by themselves, etc.

When they are finished, have them share some of their accomplishments. Ask the class to vote on who has the greatest accomplishments. If someone mentions giving their life to Christ, go ahead and include it.

Then read what Paul wrote to the Philippians—that he considers everything a loss for the sake of Christ and that he considers everything rubbish compared to knowing Christ.

Ask the class how Paul’s passion for Christ affects them and the value they put on their own accomplishments. Do Paul’s words make them want to place a different value on something? Ask them what accomplishments the world exalts and celebrates. Then help them to see that we should be more excited about Christ than the things the world celebrates.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Rubbish

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ leftovers from a recent meal (e.g., a chicken carcass) placed in a foil pan with a foil cover
- ✓ a snack like pretzels—enough for the class
- ✓ plates

This object lesson illustrates rubbish and the powerful word choice Paul used to describe all our accomplishments when compared with Christ.

Ask the class if anyone is hungry and would like a snack. After the whole class raises a hand, open up the foil tray and tilt it to show them the leftovers. Tell them you kept the scraps from last night. Pick up a plate and put some of the bones on it and take it to one of the students in the front row. Play this out for a while. Draw out the class about why they changed their minds about being hungry. Distribute the pretzels and then read the passage for today and point out Paul’s choice of words. Compared with Christ, Paul counted everything rubbish. What does that say about Paul’s love for Christ?

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Running for the Prize

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Have the class draw pictures of a runner in full sprint. On their paper have them write the words “Christ is the prize for which we run.”

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

List Paul’s Accomplishments

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ a bag of candy-coated chocolates
- ✓ a large candy bar
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

Ask the class to look over Philippians 3:3–21 and raise a hand if they can name one of Paul’s accomplishments. As the children give you the answers, make a list on the board. Give one small piece of candy to anyone who gives a correct answer. When you have exhausted all their answers, ask the children what Jesus accomplished for Paul. Give the large candy bar to the first child to raise their hand and get the correct answer. (Keep the larger candy prize hidden until you reveal it at the guessing of the correct answer.) The children will be stunned by its size.

Then ask the class how they would compare the small piece of candy to the large candy bar. They should say that it is “nothing” compared to the greatness of the larger candy bar. Use that as a way to say how Paul thought all his works combined were nothing compared with what Jesus did for him on the cross.