

GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

BY DR. JERRY VINES

By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
from Jerry Vines Ministries
2295 Towne Lake Parkway
Suite 116 #249
Woodstock, GA 30189

Let's Begin

This is the third lesson in the series on Philippians. In chapter one, we discovered three keys that unlock the door to a joy-filled life. We then noted three sure signs joy was present in the believer's life. Today, we study about how to get to know Jesus. This is significant because Jesus speaks about being our friend (John 15:11-15).

Furthermore, Jesus indicates that His joy is fulfilled in us when we are more than servants. In fact, the joy of Jesus in us means we are His friends. How, then, do we get to know Jesus? Let's follow the thought in this 3rd chapter. Here is the outline we will follow:

I. Surrendering All of Life to Him (vv.1-11)

II. Serving All of Life for Him (vv.12-16)

III. Shaping All of Life by Him (vv.17-21)

I. Surrendering All of Life to Him (vv.1-11)

Paul begins chapter three with the word “finally”. This doesn't mean he's ready to close the book. In fact, Paul has not even arrived at the heart of what he wants to say to the Philippian believers. He wants to make it perfectly clear how his life completely changed when he met Jesus Christ. Talking about change! Paul threw everything overboard for Jesus.

In the first three verses, there is an unusual amount of repetition in what Paul is saying. Educators tell us repetition still remains as one of the finest teaching tools we possess. “Rejoice” Paul continues to echo. And genuine joy is found exclusively “in the Lord” (v.1).

The Christian's life is never to be looked upon merely as a job but must be lived as a joy. Knowing Jesus made Paul's life abundantly overflowing with real joy. Ours can be as well—IF we know Jesus, the source of all joy. This brings us to precisely how we get to know Jesus. Actually, it's not hard to know Jesus. You just have to employ the *three simple strategies* Paul makes clear in chapter three.

Strategy number one: to get to know Jesus you must surrender all of life to Him.

After reminding us of the source of joy (v.1) and warning us of those who do not really know Jesus (vv.2-3), Paul begins listing an entire catalog of accomplishments he had gained in life (v.4). If any one could be saved or get to know Jesus by human attainment, it was Paul. Unfortunately, many people wrongly assume that their own good actions or sacrifices made in life accumulate on life's ledger. In fact, in talking about knowing Jesus, Paul here employs the very terms accountants of the first century would have used in counting people's money.

Note Paul's credit column vv.4-6): “circumcised the eighth day”—the proper ritual; “stock of Israel”—the proper relationship; “tribe of Benjamin”—the proper respectability; “Hebrew of Hebrews”—the proper race; “a Pharisee”—the proper religion; “zeal, persecuting the Church”—the proper reputation; “righteousness in law, blameless”—the proper righteousness.

Paul may have been the most religious man who ever lived. Yet, in counting up his religious assets, Paul came to the conclusion his life was totally empty. Nor did the assets he'd gained in life make him know God any better.

Then, he made a startling discovery! “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (v.7). The only other time the word “loss” occurs

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Reflection Connection

Recall a time when you met someone who became one of your very best friends. How did it happen? What do you think happened that made you such good friends? How is knowing Jesus as friend different from knowing another as friend?

in the New Testament is during a storm Paul would face in going to Rome when, to prevent the ship from sinking, the cargo was all thrown overboard (Acts 27:10, 21).

One glimpse of Jesus and Paul threw everything in His life overboard! All his attainments were mere junk...just so much disposable garbage (v.8). We must look at our own lives and check out our personal life ledger—money, college degrees, status, charitable gifts, good marriage.

Do you think these will help you know Jesus? They won't. You must surrender all of life to Him if you would know Him. That is the cost if you want the change.

Understand: while all in your credit line must be given up—"counting all things loss"—that does not mean you will have nothing in your profit column (v.8-9). What do you gain when you gain Christ?

First, you gain the Person of Christ. Note Paul speaks about the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". Literally, this translates as "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ."

Also, you gain the provision of Christ. It's true Paul lost his own righteousness. However, just look what he gained in its place—"the righteousness which is of God, by faith" (v.9).

Finally, though our own riches are bankrupt, we now, through surrendering all of life to Him, **we not only gain the Person of Christ, the provision of Christ, but also presence of Christ.** We're found in Him and He in us. Thus, Paul could say "that I may know Him" (v.10). His meaning in life, motive for life, his message from life is all about knowing Jesus. And knowing Jesus begins when we surrender all of life to Him.

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II. Serving All of Life for Him (vv.12-16)

Paul's earlier image was that of an accountant. He spoke of gains and losses. Now, he speaks in terms of an athlete (v.12). Once we've surrendered all of life to Him, *we are then in a position to serve all of life for Him. This constitutes strategy number two.* When we're saved, we're put in a race, given a lane to run in and also a goal to achieve.

In verse twelve, Paul tells us how the race starts—"apprehended of Christ Jesus." This is a clear reference to his salvation experience on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1-22). No one can begin the race without beginning at the starting line. That is, being "apprehended" by Jesus Christ.

"Apprehended" is a word that means "lay hold of". When did Jesus "lay hold of" you? If you have not responded to Him by faith, you falsely started the race and will be disqualified at the end. So, *the race starts* by Jesus laying hold of us.

Next, the concern is about *staying in the race.* When God places us in the race, gives us a lane in which to run, we are called to stay in it for the long haul. This



Reflection Connection

How do we stack up compared to Paul's sevenfold set of human goodness? Is it wrong to be proud of one's upbringing and heritage? Why or why not? How is being proud of one's heritage different from what Paul says he "counted as loss"?

is a race to maturity in the Christian life. It's entirely about serving all of life for Him. *There exists three crucial essentials for us to stay in the race.*

First, you must concentrate on the present. Paul writes: "this one thing I do" (v.13b). There is tremendous power in concentration whether it's pointing a drill, aiming a rifle, shooting hoops or running a race. No less concentration is required to mature in your Christian walk. And to know Jesus, you must concentrate all your efforts in serving Him.

Secondly, to stay in the race you must obliterate the past (v.13c). Note Paul's terms: "forgetting those things which are behind". That doesn't mean you fail to remember. Rather it means to no longer be influenced or affected by the past.

The runner can't run by focusing on where's he's been. He must bead all his focus on the goal ahead. You cannot change the past but you surely can break its hold over you. That's the promise of Gospel power. Old things past, all things become new. Some things need to be obliterated. For example, your past sins need to be buried. Yet, some people have a tendency to dig them up. Jesus has forgiven you. Accept it.

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Another thing that needs obliteration is past failures. Use them as learning experiences but never as lame evidence for dropping out of the race.

Interestingly, too often we remember our successes. Those too need to be obliterated. No room to rest on laurels. A race won yesterday doesn't mean a race won today, or even a race finished today for that matter.

We must also forget out past grievances. Dwelling on them will bleed out our energy for the race before us now.

Pleasures of our past need also to be banished from our thoughts. The only thing that really matters now is our present race. Run! And stay with it! Serve all of life for Him.

The third essential for staying in the race: You must progress toward the future. That's what Paul had in mind when he spoke of "reaching forth to those things which are before" (v.13c).

The picture is that of a runner stretching every nerve. He's pressing on, leaning forward with all his might, seeing the goal before him. What a picture of the Christian life.

Taking every opportunity to grow, grasping every opportunity to serve. God has wonderful goals ahead for each of us. We must run and stay running. Getting to know Jesus demands it. God deserves it. Jesus desires it.

Once we've started the race, and stayed in the race, there comes a time when we can secure the reward. We finish the race. Paul looks ahead to the finish line. He is not there yet but he nevertheless sees it: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (v.14).



The mark is what the athlete fixed his eyes upon. It consumed his entire focus during the race. Our goal is Jesus (cp. Heb. 12:2). Some mistakenly think the race is a relay. No, we cannot pass off to another. We must personally run, continue running and gain the prize at the race's end.

III. Shaping All of Life by Him (vv.17-21)

Thus far, we've discovered that the greatest knowledge we can attain is getting to know Jesus. We begin our relationship with Him by surrendering all of life to Him. We trust Him fully and completely for everything we are and everything we will ever be.

Also, we learned that maturing in our knowledge of Jesus means serving all of life for Him and is similar to a race—a race we must not only start running in but also stay running in to secure the reward at our race's end. Now we come to the *third strategy in getting to know Jesus: we must shape all of life by Him.*

One of the keys to understanding this chapter is Paul's use of the term "things". It is used eleven times here. "Things" have a lot to say about our happiness—namely, the presence of things or the absence of things. It's the proper perspective of things with which Paul is concerned. Is our perspective of things an "earthly" perspective (v.19) or a "spiritual" perspective (v.20)? In these verses then, Paul gives us two kinds of perspective. Which one shapes your life?

Paul speaks of those who "mind earthly things" (v.19). He means those who set affections on things of earth. The temporal is their total interest. This world is the limit of their horizon. Someone once said "We are fast becoming a generation of earthbound pagans". One characteristic of this perspective is it breeds "enemies of the cross" (v.18). Paul here is speaking of professing Christians. In disguise, they are only pretending to be Christians. This is the greatest threat to Christianity. And here they are breaking Paul's heart. Naively, we think the early Church was made up of only Christians. That is a myth (1 John 2:19).

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How can we tell genuine Christians from those in disguise? Jesus said "ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). Scripture speaks of wolves in sheep's clothing.

Sooner or later, all disguises will be torn away (2 Peter 2:22). Their *destiny* will be known. Paul writes that their "end is destruction" (v.19a). Also, their false *deity* will be exposed—"god is their belly" (v.19b). He means much more than the pleasure of consuming food.

Rather, it means they only live to fulfill their physical appetites, to satisfy their fleshly desires. It could be food, drugs, sex, drink or whatever. In the end, it's all about the pleasures of life now. This skewed view of things shapes their entire perspective on life. Consequently, persons like this—who live from an "earthly perspective"—cannot get to know Jesus.

Reflection Connection

What is the most significant difference between being "spiritually minded" and being "earthly mingded"?

Reflection Connection

If you could add two things to your life right now, what might they be? Do you think we have too much emphasis on "having things" in our culture? What would be a good solution to desiring "too many things"?



Finally, their *depravity* will be known by all. Paul writes that their “glory is their shame” (v.19c). They are proud of their sin. They laugh when they should weep. Their sensitivities toward sin are singed such that no embarrassment or shock is possible.

If they ever know Jesus, it will never be as the loving Lord Who saved them but as the Coming Judge Who will sentence them.

Then there are those whom Paul refers to as “spiritually minded” (cp. Col. 3:2). He tells us *three particulars about them*. First, their “conversation is in heaven” (v.20). The word “conversation” means “citizenship” thus the Christian is one who lives by the rules and laws of another state—Heaven!

He has pictured the Christian life as like an account, an athlete. Here, the Christian life is like that of an alien who belongs to another country. Jesus said we’re in the world but not of it (John 17:16).

We don’t belong down here now but in a real sense are only passing through. From that standpoint, all of life becomes shaped by Him. He is King and we are His Kingdom. Our standards are eternal not temporal, heavenly not earthly.

Secondly, the “spiritually minded” possess a heavenly anticipation indicative in Paul’s words “from whence also we look for the Savior” (v.20b).

We cannot get attached to things here because our eyes are glued on the heavens. We have a Savior coming. Thus, all our decisions and dreams should be shaped by the coming of Jesus.

Finally, those who are “spiritually minded” can expect a transformation: “Who shall change our vile body” (v.21a). “Vile” does not mean evil. Instead it means “weak” or “lowly”. It could be translated, “our body of humiliation”. How is this going to be? It is because, as Paul tells us, “He is able to subdue all things” (v.21c).

We now put things in proper order by shaping all of life by Him. This is how we get to know Jesus.

Golden Greek Nugget

skybalon translated “dung” (v.8) denotes refuse and may be one of the strongest words the Apostle Paul ever used. It was employed for rubbish or anything worthless or detestable. This is the only time the word is used in the NT. Paul is comparing all his accomplishments in life including education, vocation, religious position and prestige with his experience of meeting Jesus Christ. All else stands as worthless refuse compared to having Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Wrap Up

The most satisfying relationship any person could possibly have is knowing Jesus. Do you want to get to know Him? Here are three simple strategies to follow. First, surrender all of life to Him. You may hold nothing back. Turn over every attainment and all credentials you possess in life.

Then, you must serve all of life for Him. You are not now your own, since you gave yourself to Christ; focus on Him entirely.

Thirdly, shape all of life by Him. You now are a citizen of Heaven. You are only passing through this temporal existence. Your Homeland is eternal. Consequently, the decisions you make and the standard you employ is Heavenly-oriented not earthly-oriented. Your life must be shaped by Him in every way.

