

THE LIFE

EMBRACING THE LIFE OF A CHRIST-FOLLOWER

PART 2: THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE
UNIT 2: A DISCIPLE HUNGERS TO KNOW GOD
LESSON 20: KNOWING GOD IS AT
THE HEART OF DISCIPLESHIP

What we want students to learn: That as Christ-followers, knowing God should be one of the primary pursuits of their lives.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To evaluate how well they know God and to be able to identify anything in their lives that comes between knowing God more.

Scripture Focus: Philippians 3:8-10

Supporting Scripture: Jeremiah 9:23-24

Overview: You could make the argument that growing in your knowledge God may very well be the primary goal in the life of a Christ-follower. There are other aspects of our discipleship, to be sure. But knowing God is at the heart of what it means to follow Him. Paul got this. And in his letter to the Philippians he expresses this in a really powerful way. Paul said that NOTHING compares to knowing God. Nothing. If we're honest, many of our students, and many of us, can't quite say this. And so this lesson helps challenges all of us to reconsider our priorities and re-commit to a passionate pursuit of knowing God more.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each **LIFE** lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These are short videos designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your **LIFE** lesson 20 Teacher Prep Video, login to your Lesson Manager, navigate to lesson 20, and click on the "Background" tab. You'll notice the Teacher Prep Video near the top of the Lesson Manager window.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The *Bible Background* is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every **YM360** Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know **who** wrote the book, **when** it was written, and **why** it was written.
- **What's the big deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

THE DETAILS

- **Author:** The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. Of course we know Paul as the one-time chief enemy of the Church. After his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul would go on to have a position of great importance in the early Church and beyond. He wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
- **Time frame:** Philippians was one of the last letters Paul wrote before he was martyred, sometime around A.D 62.

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- **Purpose:** Philippians was written to Paul's close friends at the Philippian church, thanking them for their kindness and prayers while he was in prison. And he was encouraging them not to lose their faith because of his persecution.

THE SETTING

This passage is found in a letter from Paul to the church at Philippi. Paul loves this church, but they are fairly young in their spiritual maturity. In the verses leading up towards our key Scripture, Paul has just addressed the issue of pride. He explains to them that they should find their confidence in Christ instead of their own flesh. Paul was an extremely qualified religious man according to the world, but without Christ he was nothing.

THE MAIN POINT

The goal of this lesson is to teach students the importance of knowing Christ. According to Paul there is NOTHING that is more important than the knowledge that we have of Jesus Christ. We are going to highlight the fact that if we don't spend intentional time learning about God, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow God. We want to identify the factors and things that are standing between our students and their pursuit of learning more about God.

LESSON PLAN

The *Lesson Plan* contains three elements: An introductory activity called **The Lead In**; the Bible study section called **The Main Event**; and an application-focused segment called **The Last Word**.

THE LEAD IN

- **Goal:** To show students how difficult it is to identify something that you are unfamiliar with.
- **Set-Up:** Select four to five students from your class before it begins, telling them that you are going to use them for a game. Make sure that your aisles or chair set-up is conducive for people to walk between the rows while students are sitting in chairs.

FIRST, explain to the students that you are going to play an old but a classic game, Heads-Up-Seven-Up. Explain that some volunteers are going to come up front, and that everyone else will put their heads down, close their eyes, and put one of their thumbs up in front of them. The volunteers that have been preselected will then go throughout the room and push down one person's thumb of their choosing. When they have done so, the volunteers will come to the front.

Once all of your volunteers have returned to the front, tell everyone to look up, and that the people whose thumbs have been pushed down must stand up. You will then ask them to, one at a time, guess who they believe pushed down their thumb. If they get it right, then they switch places with the volunteer and come to the front. If they guess incorrectly then they sit down and lose their chance.

Say something like this before the first round begins:

- **Now this game revolves around honesty. If I catch anyone cheating or peeping I will disqualify you from the game. Volunteers, also be honest about whose thumb you pushed down, and make sure that you only push down one person's thumb. When your thumb gets pushed down make sure you keep it down so that someone else doesn't press your thumb again. It would be a good idea to also not push down your best friend's thumb; branch out.**

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You can play this two or three rounds depending on how long the rounds take, but make sure that you are watching for cheating eyes. Also be asking questions about why they thought a certain person picked them.

THEN, once the game has ended, ask students the following questions:

- **What were some of the things you focused on when your thumb got pressed down? What did you try to remember?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Could you tell if it was a boy or a girl? Did you hear any thing that would have been a give away to who pushed your thumb down?**
 - Answers will vary.

FINALLY, get students thinking about the subject of the lesson. Tell them that it is difficult to guess who pushed their thumb down because they had not studied the subtle signs of that person. They haven't studied how they walk, with heavy footsteps or light footsteps, and so on. Say something like:

- **When we don't spend time studying someone, it becomes a lot harder to identify them. We can know a little bit about the person. But the more time we spend learning about someone the easier it becomes to spot them. The same is true for many of us when it comes to Jesus. We know about Him through church or time in small groups. But not everyone spends as much time as they should learning about Jesus outside of church. Today we want to talk about the importance of spending time learning about Jesus on our own.**

THE MAIN EVENT

- **Goal:** To show students that one of the most important things they can do in their lives is to know God.
- **Set Up:** You may benefit from a dry-erase board, but it's not essential. You'll want to make sure students have a Bible or a Bible app. You may also want to pass out Scripture reading assignments to students to have three students involved in reading. Ask each student to read a single verse from Philippians 3:8-10.

FIRST, ask students what they spend a majority of their time doing. (If you have a dry-erase board you can write some of these activities out on it.) Some of the common things could be: school, sports, homework, family time, video games, reading, sleeping, etc. Then ask:

- **Why do you do some of these activities?**
- **What do you enjoy about those activities?**
- **If you had a completely free day, would you spend more time doing any of these things than you currently do?**

THEN, explain to students that these things are not bad. It's completely normal to have hobbies and interests; the Bible doesn't say that those are inherently bad things. Say something like this:

- **Paul was a man who had hobbies and things he was good at. In fact, Paul was extremely good at what he did before he became a Christian. In today's passage though Paul has some thoughts about what those hobbies and achievements mean in light of knowing God.**

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NEXT, have a student read Philippians 3:8. Explain that when Paul states that he counts it all as loss, he is referring to the reasons that he could have to boast in himself from previous verses. He states that if anyone has any reason to have pride in themselves, it would have been him because of his accomplishments as a person. Yet Paul still states that he counts everything as loss. Ask some of the following questions:

- **What does it mean to count something as loss?**
 - Answer: It means that it is less valuable. There is something as an alternative that was worth more value.
- **What does Paul compare the loss to? What replaces the loss?**
 - Answer: Everything in the world is a loss compared to the win that is knowing Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has a "surpassing worth" according to Scripture.

Talk to students about what Paul says in the latter part of the verse. Paul states that he has suffered the loss of all things, but that he counts them as rubbish so that he may gain Christ.

- **What is rubbish in the first place?**
 - Answer: Trash. Garbage. Worthless stuff.
- **Why do you think Paul uses the word rubbish to describe the things of this world?**
 - Answer: There is no natural value to the things of this world without God. The greatest treasures of this world are considered rubbish in comparison to God.
- **Contrast between two objects is a common tool of Scripture. Why do you think Paul is using contrast for this verse when discussing loss and rubbish?**
 - Answer: He wants to open the eyes of the Philippian church to where they are placing their value. He wants them to see that the things they are valuing have minimal value in comparison to Christ.

THEN, explain to the students that Paul was using some pretty extreme language here to open the eyes of the church. It is not until we realize the value of earthly things and deny them that we can be found in Christ. Say:

- **Paul is setting the framework that we must have mentally when it comes to Jesus: Jesus is the greatest treasure we can have. Paul then goes on in verse 9 to explain what happens when we begin to understand that mindset.**

NEXT, have a student read Philippians 3:9. Explain that Paul tells us that everything is rubbish in comparison to Christ, and that we must embrace this mindset if we are to be found in Christ. Paul also mentions righteousness in this verse. Ask the students to dive into what righteousness means. Ask:

- **What does the word righteous mean?**
 - Answer: It means free from guilt or sin.
- **Paul describes two types of righteousness here, where do these two types of righteousness come from?**
 - Answer: The Law and faith.
- **Is there a modern equivalent of the Jews in Paul's audience who tried to gain righteousness by following every bit of the Law?**
 - Answers will vary, but the idea is that some people believe that by "keeping all the rules" they can somehow be a righteous person.

Explain to students that a person who seeks to be righteous by following all the rules can look like a great person on the outside. They seek to define themselves by all of the outwardly good things they do, and that may make them look awesome. But Paul points out the futility of trying to live this way. Paul describes wanting his righteousness through faith in Christ. Ask some of these questions:

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- **Why should we value righteousness through faith in Christ over the world's standards?**
 - Answer: The world's standards are rubbish in comparison to faith in Christ. We live in a sinful world whose expectations and standards are tainted with sin. Christ stands above sin and struggle.
- **What does it mean to have faith in Christ?**
 - Answer: To believe in and follow Jesus.
- **How do we grow in our faith in God? What are some practical things that we do to grow in our faith?**
 - Answers will vary among students, but some common examples are: prayer, reading our Bibles, going to church, talking about Jesus with others.

THEN, explain that when we look at ways to grow in our faith in God, every single one of them takes time. Time is invested towards getting to know God, and we make choices every day on where we spend our time. This is the point where we want students to start reflecting as we address our final verse before heading into the Last Word. You can say something like this:

- **Paul wants to be identified for being found in Christ. He wants his righteousness and worth to be known for his identity in Christ. The means in which he obtains this identity is dependent on his faith in Christ. For us to grow in our faith we must spend time with Christ, and the more we spend time with Jesus the more we desire to be like him. Let's see how Paul closes this part of his message.**

NEXT, have a student read Philippians 3:10. Explain to students that there are three things that Paul talks about because of having faith in Christ. Paul had a transformational experience that came with his faith in Christ. When we come into a relationship with Christ there is a mindset shift that should occur, and Paul is describing this shift in verse 10. Ask:

- **What are the three things that Paul talks about because of faith in this passage?**
 - Answer: Know Jesus and the power of His resurrection, share in Jesus's sufferings, and become like Jesus in his death.
- **What does Paul mean by saying he wishes to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection?**
 - Answer: Paul was dead in his sin, and by knowing Jesus he is born again as a Christian. Paul experiences freedom from sin through Jesus.
- **Why do you think Paul wants to share in the sufferings of Jesus?**
 - Answer: When Paul suffers for Christ, he knows that he is doing the right thing. Jesus suffered for doing what was right in a world full of wrong, and so when Paul suffers for Jesus, his identity is becoming even more like Christ.
- **Paul says that he wants to become like Jesus in his death referring to Jesus's attitude. What attitude did Jesus take to the cross that Paul wants to become like?**
 - Answer: Jesus died knowing that He had lived for God's glory. If Paul was going to suffer, he must embrace the comfort that is pursuing Christ and being like Christ.

Talk to students about how powerfully Paul describes being in a relationship with Christ. There is great comfort that comes from being in a relationship with Jesus, but we only know that comfort when we spend time getting to know Jesus.

FINALLY, explain to students that Paul isn't telling us not to have stuff. And He also isn't telling us that if we follow Jesus it is permanent suffering. Did Paul suffer? Absolutely. Paul also did an incredible amount of good for the Kingdom of God, because he constantly pursued learning about Jesus so that he could be like Jesus. Say something like:

- **Paul described everything the world has to offer as rubbish because he had his eyes constantly focused on Jesus. Whenever Paul's eyes came off Jesus due to the world's temptations, he realized how miniscule they are in comparison to Jesus. It's not bad to have things, hobbies, or achievements. The problem**

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is that when we spend more time chasing after those things instead of our relationship with Jesus, our focus gets messed up. Paul calls everything else rubbish because he spent most of his time pursuing Jesus. Where or what do we spend our time in pursuit of?

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *The Last Word*.

THE LAST WORD

- **Goal:** To evaluate how well they know God, and to identify things in their life that are taking priority over getting to know God more.
- **Set-Up:** Be prepared to show the following YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoy4>

FIRST, explain to the students that you are about to show a video. Ask them how good they are at counting, and that this video is designed to test that. Show the video. When you've finished, allow students who saw the bear to raise their hands. You'll most likely want to play the video again so students who missed it can see it the second time around.

THEN, explain that it's very easy to stay focused on one thing and miss the world around it. When they were focused on counting they missed the bear, but once they focused on the bear the counting falls off. Say something like:

- **Although it is a silly example with the video, we often do the same thing in our spiritual lives. As people, we are often unable to focus on two important things at the same time. And even if you claim to be a good multitasker, you are still splitting your efforts. Paul's message from our passage today is simply to make sure that the primary focus of our lives is on knowing Christ.**

NEXT, explain to the students that this isn't just a struggle for students. The struggle of distractions from Christ remain for our entire lives, and we must choose daily to follow and pursue Christ. Ask:

- **What are some things that we spend a lot of time focusing that aren't our relationship with God?**
 - Answers will vary depending on age. The key is for them to understand that when we only have so much attention, and the attention that we give to something else takes it away from God.
- **Did Paul describe his life as being better or worse when he made Jesus the primary pursuit of his life? Why?**
 - Answer: Better, because in comparison to Christ everything else is rubbish. Which means that investment into his relationship with Christ would always be more valuable.

FINALLY, remind students of the activity that happened at the beginning of the lesson. When their thumb was pushed down they started focusing on the different things about that mystery person: what did they sound like walking? How hard did they push down the thumb? They focused because they wanted to know as much as they could so that they could guess who the person was. Say something like this to close:

- **The distractions in this world are many, and they are often a tailored fit for us. But when Christ enters our lives, there is a transformational change for the better, and the more we learn about Jesus the more comforted we are. Where are your priorities? Let's recommit ourselves today to a passionate pursuit of Jesus as our top priority.**

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Encourage them that this journey is truly worth it, and challenge them to encourage each other to stay focused and free of rubbish distractions.

- Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're posting them on Instagram, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.
- Use the **Social Media** guide to stay in touch with students via text or Instagram, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.