

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Philippians: A Choice to Rejoice

Lesson 9: Lose to Win

Bible Text

Philippians 3:1-11

Memory Verse

“So now, my Christian brothers, be happy because you belong to Christ.” (Philippians 3:1a)

Word List

artificial: not natural or real; made or done to seem like something real, but still false

badge of honor: something worn to show that a person deserves respect

opinion: a belief, judgment, or way of thinking about something

substitute: a person or thing that takes the place of something else

Sometimes I want an easier way to have a garden. **Artificial** flowers would be easier to use. They would never die. Maybe I could cover the ground with cement so the weeds could not grow through. Animals and insects would not bother an artificial garden.

But there is no **substitute** for real life. Artificial flowers never grow or change with the seasons. They do not have the smell of God’s flowers. The butterflies would not come. The hummingbirds would not drink from them. Bees would not make honey. There would be no life in that garden.

Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi is filled with joy. He used the words *joy*, *happy*, and *rejoice* nine times in the first two chapters. Paul told his readers again and again to find their joy in real life with God. He warned them to never trust in artificial things. Joy and life come from Christ alone. There is no substitute for a relationship with Christ.

How to Lose by Winning

(Philippians 3:1-6)

1 So now, my Christian brothers, be happy because you belong to Christ. It is not hard for me to write the same things to you. It is good for you.

2 Watch out for false teachers. Watch out for sinful men. They want you to depend on the religious act of becoming a Jew for your hope.

My garden is never finished. I must work every day to have a beautiful garden. But I love doing it. There is always something new and exciting to see. I have some of my best prayer times with the Lord there. The garden is filled with joy. The butterflies and birds and bees love the flowers. I work to pull the weeds and water the plants. But this work is good for me. And it is good for the garden.

3 The act of becoming a Jew has nothing to do with us becoming Christians. We worship God through His Spirit and are proud of Jesus Christ. We have no faith in what we ourselves can do.

4 I could have reason to trust in the flesh. If anyone could feel that the flesh could do something for him, I could.

5 I went through the religious act of becoming a Jew when I was eight days old. I was born a Jew and came from the family group of Benjamin. I was a Jewish son of Jewish parents. I belonged to the group of the proud religious law-keepers.

6 I followed my religion with all my heart and did everything I could to make it hard for the church. No one could say anything against the way I obeyed the Law.

Paul used very strong words to describe the false teachers. In Greek, he called them dogs. These were not pets, but wild, dangerous animals. He said they were sinful men who do evil things.

The false teachers put their trust in the wrong things. They said that a person could only be a child of God if they became a Jew. That meant everyone would have to follow the laws the Jews had made. They said only Jews were true children of God. But “God

loved the *world* so much that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). His love is for every person on earth. The real children of God worship God by His Holy Spirit.

The false teachers followed their rules to be seen by men. They wanted everyone to know how hard they worked at their religion. Their actions were like **badges of honor**. They trusted these things to make them right with God. Their lives looked good on the outside but did not lead to life with God. They were proud to prove in their bodies they were Jews. They depended on their family history and the religion of the Jews to make them right with God. The **opinions** of other people mattered more to them than what God said.

Paul said if anyone had a right to trust these things, he did. Paul would win if this was a contest. He was born a Jew in the nation of Jews. His family came from the faithful tribe of Benjamin. Paul belonged to the group of the best law-keepers. And no one worked harder at his religion than Paul. He put a lot of energy into his religion. He thought he was pleasing God when he put followers of Jesus in jail. No one could say anything against how well Paul followed the Law.

Today, we still struggle with these same kinds of false beliefs. Today some churches believe that one must do certain things to be a true believer. These things we do with our bodies cannot make us right with God. Some

people depend on their family history to make them right with God. Even the best family cannot pass down a relationship with Christ. We all must choose to follow Christ for ourselves. We even think our church is the best and other churches are wrong. It is Jesus that makes people and churches right with God. Then some of us believe we are surely God's true children if we work hard in the church. We can be like Paul and put a lot of energy into the wrong things. We can win the good opinions of other people and lose a relationship with God. We lose when our hearts are full of sin and pride. Paul said, "Watch out!"

How to Win by Losing (Philippians 3:7-11)

7 But I gave up those things that were so important to me for Christ.

8 Even more than that, I think of everything as worth nothing. It is so much better to know Christ Jesus my Lord. I have lost everything for

Him. And I think of these things as worth nothing so that I can have Christ.

9 I want to be as one with Him. I could not be right with God by what the Law said I must do. I was made right with God by faith in Christ.

10 I want to know Him. I want to have the same power in my life that raised Jesus from the dead. I want to understand and have a share in His sufferings and be like Christ in His death.

11 Then I may be raised up from among the dead.

At one time, Paul thought his actions were badges of honor, too. He was proud. But all these efforts could not bring him into a relationship with God. He was at war with God. He won peace and joy only in Christ. Paul walked away from that old life. He buried it like trash. He counted it all as a loss. Then Paul spent his life seeking to know Christ more and more.

Paul said, "I want to be as one with Him." He was willing and eager to be one with Christ even if it meant suffering. He wanted to be like Christ even in His death. Paul wanted to be raised from the dead works of the flesh to win life in Christ forever. What peace comes when we give up what is worthless and simply trust what Christ has done. What joy comes from living with Jesus every day.

Things to Think About

1. Are there worthless things in your life that you trust to give you a relationship with Christ?
2. Have you experienced the joy and peace of Christ for yourself?
3. What have you given up to gain God's forgiveness, peace, and joy?
4. How are you growing in Christ every day?

Things to Remember

Today people are looking for joy and peace in all the wrong places. We can lose our joy over things that really do not count. Our religion, nation, family, and work can keep us busy. But those things cannot make us happy. What other people think about us will not get us to heaven. When we come to Christ, we lose everything we have. We lose worry, guilt, pride, and work. We give up our opinions and agree with God. Then He gives us peace, joy, forgiveness, and a life full of God's purposes.

Philippians 3:1-11

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