

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters
Sermon Series - Focus On What Drives Us
Sermon Title - Focus On Knowing Christ
Sermon Text - Philippians 3:7-14
Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

“You give life, You are love You bring light to the darkness
You give hope, You restore Every heart that is broken”
Knowing Christ doesn't take us out of this old dark world, and it doesn't keep our hearts from being broken at times, but knowing Christ gives us hope in darkness because He is the light of the world, and He restores our broken hearts because He is the Savior of the world! Let's pray and ask God to teach us today why it's so important to focus on knowing Christ! Pray!

Introduction:

When we first started our church we had a list of Core Values which were written in our church bylaws and constitution. Here's the list...

We were created by God
The Bible is God's written revelation to humankind
Jesus was God's living revelation to humankind
Jesus made our salvation possible through his death on the cross
A personal commitment to Christ is necessary for salvation
Worship is central
Outreach is critical (lifestyle)
Discipleship is commanded
Every member is a minister
Mission minded

We definitely value those things, but when Andrew Ogea was going through his doctoral work, we realized that the statements we just read are more Core Doctrines. Andrew did some research and found numerous passages of Scripture that are Chapter 3 verse 10 with things we value. So he came up with a list of what he called 310 values from those Scriptures. There were several! We had a staff retreat this past year and discussed these things. We've narrowed the list down to three major core values for our church and we call them...

310 Values

At Northshore Church we value...

Knowing Christ...Becoming Like Christ...Making Christ Known

I think you would agree with me that if we concentrate on these three values, then other things will surely fall into place. Amen? Amen!! Each one of these core values is associated with a 3:10 passage of Scripture. I will make a recommendation at some point this year to vote to make

these our main core values and to make the change in our bylaws. Today we are going to focus on the first one!

Knowing Christ Philippians 3:10

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

We will read that verse in its context in just a moment. But when we think about knowing Christ, we must realize it's one thing to know about Jesus and it's quite another thing to know Jesus! Knowing about someone and knowing someone is so different! I know about presidents and famous people, but I don't know any presidents personally, and I only know a couple of well known musicians. But here's the thing, I have been given the ability and the privilege to get to know the creator of the Universe, Jesus Christ, personally, and I can talk with Him and fellowship with Him on a daily basis, if I'm willing to do so. Isn't it amazing that the creator of the universe would take the time out of His busy schedule to talk with little ole me? Yes it is amazing! Now, why do I call Jesus the Creator of the universe? Because God's Word, speaking of Jesus, says this...

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And then down in verses 10 and 14 we read...

John 1:10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Wow,

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

I don't know about you, but I want to get to know that guy more and better every day I live! I want to see His glory! I know He is full of grace and truth and God knows I need grace and truth in my life every moment of every day! I can't live the life I'm supposed to live and I can't live a life of peace and hope and joy, if I don't have more of His grace and truth in my life every day! And for that I need to be in His presence! Oh, I could live life without Him, but the quality of that

life and the purpose of that life would be drastically reduced. I still remember my life before Jesus, my life without Jesus, and I can tell you it wasn't a pretty picture! I was without hope, peace or purpose. I don't want to ever go back to that life! Sometimes people get offended when I say things like this and they might ask me if I think their life is meaningless and without purpose just because they are not a follower of Jesus? Do I think they can't have love in their hearts for others and have meaningful relationships with others? And I will quickly tell them, "that's not what I'm saying!" What I am saying is that if your purpose and meaning in life are both wrapped up in the things of this world, success, material wealth, achievements, and popularity, those things can come and go in a flash. And I'm just saying that I believe and have experienced the difference my relationship with Jesus has made in all of my other relationships! Since Jesus came into my life, while I'm certainly not perfect, I no longer just live for me, myself and I! And the fact that I put Jesus first place and others ahead of myself, has brought about an amazing transformation in my relationships!

Here at Northshore Church we value getting to know Jesus not just as our Savior from sin, and our Savior for eternal life. We also value getting to know Jesus as our friend, our guide, our leader, and our Lord in this life! It's about getting to know Jesus as the source of your wisdom, the one you turn to when making decisions, the one you turn to when needing strength, provision, peace and protection! It's about realizing that Jesus wants to be your priority in life! And trust me, when He's the priority, everything else falls into the right sequence on your list of priorities. Husbands, when Jesus is your priority then your wife will be next in line, not third or fourth. And the same for wives. When Jesus is your priority then your husband will be next in line, not third or forth! And then your family will come next in line and other things will take their proper place. When Jesus is Lord of your life, He will guide you to set the right priorities and when your priorities in life are right, God can put His blessing on your life! You see, our core values as a church body should also be the core values of each individual member and attender of our church! So it's vital that we value getting to know Jesus deeply! Let's look at the context of our 310 core value for today and then we'll look at several ways in which we get to know Jesus better. Paul the Apostle wrote these words to the Philippian church as he shared his testimony with them about coming out of the legalism of Judaism, and finding freedom in knowing Christ Jesus the Lamb of God, the Savior of the World, the Son of God. You'll see it's clear that Paul is encouraging us to focus on knowing Jesus! Listen...

Philippians 3:7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

In this passage we discover that...

Knowing Christ will reveal things we need to Lose

Paul said clearly, "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ!" In other words, Paul was saying, I'm walking away from the things of the world that used to mean

so much to me, that took up so much of my time and energy, because they demanded my attention and my allegiance. I now see that it squandered my resources, was stealing true joy and happiness, and was keeping me from realizing my God given potential! I realized that those things were hurting me and causing me to hurt others! For Paul it had been his religious pride in seeing how closely he could follow the letter of the law and move up in the ranks of the religious elite! Here's what he said in the words just before our text...

Philippians 3:2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh.
Philippians 3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—
Philippians 3:4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:
Philippians 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;
Philippians 3:6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But Paul had come to realize that he had been so laser focused on trying to establish his own righteousness by observing the law that it caused him to do unthinkable things. In fact Paul was standing in the crowd and cheering on those who were stoning Stephen, one of the early leaders of the Church. By the way, Paul's Hebrew name was Saul, and his Greek name Paul. Listen...

Acts 7:59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
Acts 7:60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."
When he had said this, he fell asleep.
Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
Acts 8:2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.
Acts 8:3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

But one day, Saul, on his way to the synagogue in Damascus to find more Christians to imprison, met Jesus in a vision from God and his life was forever changed.

Acts 9:3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
Acts 9:4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
Acts 9:5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

Most of us don't meet Jesus in such an epic fashion, but when you do meet Jesus, things change! Paul is confronted with the fact that what he thought was a good thing, persecuting

Christians, was actually persecuting Jesus, and Paul had thought that was okay too, but now he meets Jesus in this vision, and what a vision that must have been. Paul was given some instructions by The Lord in his vision and he follows those instructions and his life takes a dramatic turn. Paul had been previously blinded by his hate filled self-righteousness, but now he has been blinded physically by the light of Jesus. But Jesus gives him back his eyesight about three days later. And what Paul is allowed to see in his life of ministry that followed is nothing short of amazing! Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was given instructions to follow and Paul made the decision to follow those instructions. He surrendered his past goals and replaced them with the goals God had for him. The old hymn had not yet been written, but I believe Paul's new attitude showcases the lyrics. Listen...

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him, In His presence daily live.

I surrender all, I surrender all; All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit, Truly know that Thou art mine. [Refrain]

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me. [Refrain]

And know this: If you give up something to follow Jesus it will be worth it! His blessing will fall on you because of your obedience! What is there in your life today that you know you need to surrender to Jesus? There may be things in your life that you know are not only standing between you and your fellowship with Jesus, but those things may be destroying your relationship with your spouse, your children, and could be destroying your witness to lost people around you!

And here's something to think about: If you surrender something to Jesus that wasn't necessarily an evil thing, maybe it was just too much of a priority in your life, once you surrender it to the Lordship of Christ, He may give it back to you in a better way and use it in your life. Let me give you a personal example. I love music so much. However, at one time it was too much of a priority in my life. I genuinely gave it to the Lord and He later gave it back to me and allowed me to record three Christian Rock Albums. To God be the glory! So let me put it this way: As we get to know Jesus better we will realize that there are some things we need to lose, and other things that need to be reprioritized! It's not wrong to have things or hobbies but we sure need to allow Jesus to be Lord of everything in our lives! When He is Lord of our work, our hobbies, our stuff, our friendships and our relationships, then we have His wisdom to guide us and His blessing to favor us! But knowing Jesus is not just about what we give up, it's about what we gain.

Knowing Christ will reveal things we need to Find

Paul said...

Philippians 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ

Philippians 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Philippians 3:11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Do you remember the song by the rock group U2 “I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For!”

Another song, “There’s Gotta be More to Life” written by five different writers and recorded by Stacie Orrico stated it this way...

“I’ve got it all, But I feel so deprived, I go up I come down, and I’m emptier inside
Tell me what is this thing that I feel like I’m missing, And why can’t I let it go
There’s gotta be more to life, Than chasing down every temporary high to satisfy me
’Cause the more that I’m tripping out thinking there must be more to life
Well it’s life but I’m sure, There’s gotta be more, Than wanting more...
I’ve got the time and I’m wasting it slowly, Here in this moment I’m halfway out the door
Onto the next thing, I’m searching for something that’s missing”

Once you meet Jesus you will begin a journey of understanding that all the things you are searching for and need to find can be found in your personal relationship with Him and in the plans and direction He has for your life! If you try to find your happiness, your meaning in life and your joy in life in your own selfish pursuits you will always be disappointed. You will find temporary happiness and fulfillment, but it will never be enough and it will never last! You will be left always wanting more in a negative way. And why do I say “in a negative way?” Two reasons. First: The dissatisfaction and emptiness the world leaves you with is due to the fact that you can’t fill the God shaped void in your heart with anything but God. Secondly: The more you try to find satisfaction in things that can’t bring you what you really need, the more disappointment you will experience! So the world always leaves you wanting more in a negative way. But here’s a surprising thing: The more I get to know Jesus, I’m also always left wanting more, but in a positive way! First: I’m left wanting more, not because He didn’t satisfy my soul, but precisely because He did satisfy my soul and with such joy, peace, clarity and purpose that I want more, so much more! Secondly: Jesus brings fulfillment to my life and to everything else in my life, including my marriage, my ministry, my music, and my other pursuits in life! Even my hobbies take on purpose and meaning beyond just being hobbies!

Now for Paul, his whole life had become wrapped up in his pursuit of power, position, prestige and popularity within the ruling religious establishment of his day. He was moving up in each of these areas, but you've got to know that something was bugging Paul deep down inside. I've often wondered how many times his mind went back to the picture he saw on the day Stephan was stoned to death as Stephan prayed for the very folks who were stoning him to death. On that day he met Jesus in the vision and heard the voice of Jesus say to him,

Acts 9:5... "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,"

On that day Paul began realizing that he needed to gain Christ, not persecute Christ! He began realizing he needed to be found in Christ, no longer trying to establish his own righteousness by the law, but to find the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith in Christ! It is by faith that we come to know Jesus as our Savior in the first place. Paul said this in Romans 3...

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Romans 3:22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith...

And then it is by faith that we come to know Jesus as our Lord on a daily basis as we yield and surrender our will and our wants and wishes to gain God's will, God's ways, and God's wishes for our lives. And we must remember that God's plans for us are far greater than anything we could ever conjure up! His ways and His thoughts are higher than ours and He knows best!! In this situation, it really is true that Father knows best! Our Heavenly Father knows best! Paul said this in Romans 5...

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

And then he made this powerful statement about the lives we live for Jesus in this life...

2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith.

2 Thessalonians 1:12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So as we gain Christ and are found in Him, no longer trying to establish our own righteousness, but finding the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith in Christ we also discover that...

Knowing Christ will result in new goals we need to Pursue

Paul says in our text...

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Philippians 3:11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Philippians 3:13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

The Goal to overcome our past!

Aren't you glad that once we place our faith in Jesus we can forget what is behind and reach for what is ahead? We are forgiven!! I love the way theologian Frank Stagg put it in the Broadman Commentary...

“Conversion is a radical break with the past, but it is a beginning and not an end. Salvation has a beginning and a goal, but it is known in one’s lifetime as a process.”

Frank Stagg, “Philippians,” in 2 Corinthians–Philemon, ed. Clifton J. Allen, Broadman Bible Commentary (Broadman Press, 1970), 208.

An important part of that process is...

The Goal to overcome the power of Sin in the present!

Once we accept Jesus as our Savior by believing in what He did on the cross for us, our soul is eternally saved and we no longer have to worry about that! But Jesus did not only die for us to find salvation from the penalty of sin in eternity, He also died so that we could have freedom from the power of sin in this life!

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

When we accept, believe, and trust what Jesus did for us on the cross, then this miracle happens...

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

So if that miracle has happened and we are saved by grace why does Paul say “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me,” and “straining toward what is ahead?” While we are saved by grace and not by works and we stay saved by grace and not by works, God has called us to do good works in Christ Jesus and that takes work! Accepting Jesus as our Savior requires that we admit our sin, believe Jesus died on the Cross to pay for our sin and then to call upon the Name of The Lord for Salvation. When we believe we are adopted into the family of God and we begin our new life! That new life is based on grace through faith, that’s the foundation. But then we begin growing and being transformed and made new in our hearts and minds. We live by faith daily and while our sins are forgiven, if we want to have daily power over sin we must walk by faith! Jesus said this...

Luke 9:23 Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

Our transformation happens on a daily basis as we get to know Jesus more and better by spending time with Him! He said take up your cross and follow me! So we’re not talking about a glance at Jesus, but a gaze upon Jesus! We’re talking about fixing our eyes upon Jesus. Remember the passage we read last week in Hebrews?

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us,

Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith...

In order to do this you will have to give up some time somewhere else, but trust me it will be time well spent! Here’s the deal: when you love someone you want to spend time with them! When you spend time with someone you want to talk with them and you want them to talk with you! With Jesus, our prayer time is us speaking to Him. With Jesus, our study of The Word of God is Him speaking to us! And here’s a beautiful thing: Because of The Holy Spirit, The Lord’s Spirit living within us, after our devotional time is over, we don’t walk away and leave Jesus in our quiet place, He goes with us! And because of our study in, meditation on, and memorization of His Word The Holy Spirit is able to bring those things to our minds and memory as we need them throughout the day and throughout our lives! The Psalmist described this connection of prayer and study of God’s Word in a beautiful way. Listen...

Psalm 119:145 I call with all my heart; answer me, LORD, and I will obey your decrees.

Psalm 119:146 I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes.

Psalm 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word.

Psalm 119:148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

Psalm 119:149 Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.

Getting to know Jesus through prayer and the Word! What a combo! So I have a question for you: Do you have any goals for your prayer life and for your study of God's Word? It's so important and vital as we seek to become more like Jesus.

The very word Christian literally means "little Christ" or Christ-like or like-Christ!

And here's a beautiful thing: When you spend time with Jesus in prayer and study of His Word, there's just no way you're not going to end up in worship! Why? Because to know Him is to love Him, and when we worship with our praise, and with our lives that is the way we show our love to Jesus! We worship individually and privately, but we also worship corporately and publicly! As you get to know Him you will naturally worship Him for who he is, for what He's done, and for what you know He's going to do in your life! The Psalmist David put it beautifully in Psalm 63...

Psalm 63:2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.

Psalm 63:3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

Psalm 63:4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

We don't think it strange to jump to our feet and lift our hands when our team makes a touchdown, and people don't think twice about holding up their phones at a concert with the light on, and us custom car and truck people, don't think twice about holding our hands out towards a vehicle we like as we say "how cool is that!" When you spend time getting to know Jesus, and you begin experiencing His presence in your life, and you see Him for who He is, in all of His glory, it's just so awe inspiring you may all of a sudden find yourself with your hands outstretched as you exclaim with your voice...

Psalm 63:3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

Psalm 63:4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

Let's pray!