

ST. BARNABAS CHURCH, SWANLAND

SMALL GROUPS NOTES

Sharing Christ through friendship

Week beginning 27 February 2011. 2nd Sunday before Lent.

Reading: Philippians 3:1-11

Theme: Feeling good- even when you are... in conflict.

Welcome/ icebreaker	Imagine a disagreement. How did arise? How did it resolve? Or didn't it?
Worship	Choose songs about transformation and God's strength in weakness. Suggestions: How deep the Father's love for us. When I survey the wondrous cross Note the lines in these: I will not boast in anything: no gifts, no power, no wisdom. My richest gain I count but loss
Pray	that the Holy Spirit will reveal God's truth to you and for you today, as you read his word and meet him through it.
Word (refs. ↓) (Phil: 3:1-11)	Sermon available to listen to on www.stbchurch.org.uk if you missed it. Click on downloads. Here Paul takes the opportunity to remind the readers that the old covenant of circumcision and observance of the law (the Torah) was wholly replaced by the new covenant of 'justification by faith alone'. The debate over circumcision was a cause of great conflict in the early church and threatened to tear it apart.
Phil: 3:1	How do you think Paul meant that we should "Rejoice in the Lord"? Do you think that some expressions have become so used (perhaps overused) that they have lost their meaning. How do we stop them becoming just formulas?
Phil. 3:2-6	Note that this passage is deeply and repeatedly ironic. The clue to understanding it is to take the reference to "the circumcised" in verse 3 as if it was in inverted commas, to mean "we who are the true members of the kingdom". The Jews call themselves the circumcised and the Gentiles (to whom Paul was writing) as the "uncircumcised" (see Ephesians 2:11). Having sorted that out, what do we rely on for our status in our community? Spend some time thinking what we would have written for ourselves or might have written for verses 5 and 6.
Phil:3:7-11	Here the passage moves into the language of accounts: a profit and loss account or perhaps a balance sheet. All his "assets" are given as liabilities, and what we might casually think of as liabilities are shown as his true assets. What is then on the other side of the balance sheet? See how many of these form part of our daily walk with Jesus.

Reflection	If Paul had been writing to our churches today, what do you think he would have pinpointed as the issues which threaten to tear it apart and how might he have brought us back to the central truths?
	<p>Pray for the same Holy Spirit of Jesus who equipped Paul, to come, to re-fill us with everything we need to help us shine in our personal contexts.</p> <p>Pray as the Holy Spirit leads.</p>
Witness	<p>How and where will we 'rejoice in the Lord', in practical ways this week?</p> <p>Think, perhaps of work colleagues, friends, neighbours or family with needs. What specific ministry will we get involved with this week? Ask the Holy Spirit of Jesus to prompt our thinking and then let's all allow Jesus to be seen in us!</p>

John Downing
Swanland 26 February 2011