

## Philippians 3:1-9 (un)Qualified for the Race Sermon-based Discussion Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To understand that we can only be truly accepted by God through faith in Jesus, not by our performance. To learn to experience the acceptance of God through faith.

**Sermon Refresher:** Though he was a very religious man, when the apostle Paul converted to Christianity, he realized that even his best righteousness could not make him acceptable to God. He realized that true righteousness, and thus true acceptance by God, only comes as a gift from God, through faith in Christ.

**Icebreaker:** What's a personal rule or habit that is very important to you that you try not to break? How do you feel about yourself when you keep it? How about when you don't keep it?

### **Discussion:**

1. Read Galatians 2:16. Keep in mind that the word "justified" means acceptable to God. What are the two different ways that we can attempt to be acceptable to God?
2. Read this short excerpt from Jerry Bridges:

"In this passage, Paul says that 'by works of the law no one will be justified' before God. 'Justified' is an evaluative term based on one's obedience to a law. It is a legal or courtroom evaluation. To be justified means that one has been declared right according to the appropriate law. According to the Bible, to be justified means to be declared righteous by God with respect to his law. It also means to be accepted and treated by God as such."<sup>1</sup>

3. Even if we aren't trying to keep the laws of God to be acceptable to him, we all try to find our sense of worthiness and acceptance from somewhere. Anything that we derive our sense worth or acceptance is thus a kind of "righteousness." Look at the

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<sup>1</sup> *Who Am I?: Identity in Christ* by Jerry Bridges

list of kinds of “righteousness” that Dave gave in the sermon. Where do you tend to find your sense of worth and acceptance?

**Job righteousness:** I’ve worked hard for everything I have, so God has rewarded me.

**Family righteousness:** Because I “do things right” as a parent, I’m more godly than parents who can’t control their kids.

**Theological righteousness:** I know the Bible and good theology, so God prefers me over those who have bad theology.

**Intellectual righteousness:** I am better read, more educated, more articulate, more intellectually capable, and more culturally savvy than others, which makes me superior.

**Busy righteousness:** I am always very busy, which makes me more disciplined and more important than others.

**Social Justice righteousness:** I care more about the poor and disadvantaged the way everyone else should but doesn’t.

**Moralistic righteousness:** Too many Christians aren’t as committed to personal holiness like I am.

**Non-Moralistic righteousness:** I can’t stand moralistic Christians who are SO judgmental!

**Better-shape righteousness:** I work out and eat well, so I’m better than those fat, undisciplined, out-of-shape people.

**Political righteousness:** I really get the true message of Christ, so I vote better than those who just don’t get it.

**Tolerance righteousness:** I hope others notice just how open-minded and accepting I am toward those who are different. In fact, I should post something online right now so people will know!

**Hipster righteousness:** I hope people notice just how much I don’t care what people think of me.

**Non-hipster righteousness:** I hope people notice just how much I don't care what people think of me.<sup>2</sup>

4. Read Galatians 3:10 and James 2:10. According to these verses, why is it that no one can be accepted by God through our own righteousness (whatever form that may take for us)?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. According to this verse, how does "faith in Christ Jesus" make us acceptable to God?
6. If you believe that God is accepting you and treating you, not according to your own spiritual resume, but according to the spiritual resume of Jesus, how would that affect your relationship with God?
7. Describe what it looks like for you to have a good day spiritually and a bad day spiritually. Now describe your subjective experience of acceptance before God on both of those days.
8. In Galatians 2:20, Paul tells us how not to fall into this performance trap. What does he say we must do to experientially continue to feel the joy and confidence of our acceptance with God?

**Sharing and Prayer:** Galatians 6:2 says that part of being a Christian community is "carrying each other's burdens." What is a burden you have been carrying recently that you can share so that others can help carry it and pray for you?

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<sup>2</sup> This list was adapted from *The Gospel-centered Life* by Robert H. Thune and Will Walker

## **Philippians 3:1-9 (un)Qualified for the Race Exercise**

As we talked about this week, we all tend to drift back into trusting in our performance instead of Christ. This is an exercise to help us actively and continually put our faith back onto Christ so that we can continue to experience the joy of God's acceptance.

God knows that our faith needs great encouragement, so he has given us some powerful reminders and word-pictures in the Bible to help us better experience His acceptance of us. Take some time this week to reflect on these promises of God's acceptance of you in Christ. We recommend you do this on seven different days. After each reflection, take a few moments to thank God for his acceptance of you in Christ.

Day 1: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Day 2: Colossian 2:13-14

Day 3: Isaiah 43:25

Day 4: Isaiah 61:10

Day 5: Micah 7:19

Day 6: Psalm 103:11-12

Day 7: Romans 5:1-2