

The Excellence Of The
Knowledge Of Christ

Philippians 3:3-11

MEMORY VERSE

PHILIPPIANS 3:8A

“But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Three bananas at different stages of ripeness (from just right to over-ripe).

A backpack filled with things for a hike, several pairs of shoes that would be inappropriate for mountain climbing, such as slippers, tennis shoes or dress shoes and a pair of hiking boots. If you do not have hiking boots you may want to draw a picture.

As many “Just a Rock?” worksheets as the number of children in your class.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Bad/Better/Best Banana

Bring three bananas to class. One should be totally black and squishy (this can be quickly achieved by freezing it overnight), the next should be mostly black (more than just speckled), and the final one should be perfect and yellow. The kids will easily be able to select the "best" one.

Choosing to follow Jesus is like choosing the best banana. In comparison to knowing Jesus, everything else in life is kind of like a rotten banana. Use this illustration to introduce today's lesson. Explain that the best thing in life is knowing Jesus. A life that is given over to anything other than a relationship with Jesus will become like the rotten banana.

LESSON TIME!

People in our world look up to the wealthy that seem to have everything: money, influence, and possessions. The world thinks that it is important to go to the right schools, to have the right teachers, to live in the best neighborhoods, to have a fancy car and to do all the right things to become someone important by the world's standards.

In the Jewish world, as a young man, Paul had it all. Paul grew up in a good, wealthy Jewish home. He was of the tribe of Benjamin. His teacher, Gamaliel, was very well known, famous, and respected. Paul was a member of the Pharisees. He had a bright future with the religious leaders and teachers of his day. He had everything his world had to offer. But it was not enough.

All of these things could never bring Paul happiness. When we first see Paul, he is working for the Jewish leaders trying to put Christians in jail and having them killed. He thought he was serving God. One day on the way to Damascus with arrest orders in his hands, he met Jesus and found the true meaning to life. From that moment on Paul's life would never be the same. Jesus is the way, the only way to true happiness.

Knowing Jesus is the greatest thing in life.

SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS: You may want to tell the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9. Use a lot of excitement in telling it or allow the children to act it out.

PHILIPPIANS 3:3

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

It is not the cutting of our bodies or following a tradition that make us children of God. We are set aside because we have chosen to worship Him through belief in Jesus Christ. We cannot save ourselves by being good enough or by putting confidence in the world and its ways.

How did Paul know he was saved? Was it because of the good things that he did, or because he was a religious person? No, he knew he was saved because he believed in Jesus Christ. We can know that we are saved. If you have asked Jesus to come into your heart, then you are saved.

PHILIPPIANS 3:4, 5

though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:

circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

Basically Paul is saying that if being rich and important were enough, I would have more reason than most of you. I was part of the right family; I followed all the Jewish rules and traditions. I was a Hebrew of Hebrews. When someone looks at my life it is pretty impressive.

What Paul had to learn was that none of that mattered. That was having confidence in the flesh, or what we could do to impress God. God is not impressed with how we look, how important we are or how much money we have. God only looks at our hearts and what impresses Him is a heart that is willing to serve Him.

PHILIPPIANS 3:6

concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

I was very sincere in my beliefs. I worked very hard to do what I thought was right. I actively persecuted the church because I thought they were wrong. I followed the Jewish law very closely. I worked hard to be righteous. I was trying to earn my way to heaven by being good enough. I tried to obey every Jewish law right down to the very last point.

There may be people who are not Christians who are trying to please the Lord by being good people. Maybe they are trying to earn their way to heaven like Paul was, but they really do not have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus said that no one could get to the Father except through Him.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

When I met Jesus Christ and accepted Him into my life, I found that what I was and the things I thought were important were meaningless. Jesus has a way of changing the way that we look at things. Jesus is the way, the only way. Nothing else matters. **Knowing Jesus is the greatest thing in life.**

The Mountain Climber's Dilemma

Bring a backpack filled with things for a hike and several pairs of shoes inappropriate for mountain climbing such as house slippers, tennis shoes or dress shoes. Also bring a pair of hiking boots.

Tell the class of the hiker's problem. He can only carry the backpack over the steep and rocky mountain and not the shoes. He must choose only one pair of shoes and once he puts them on, he cannot take them off until he completes the trip.

Try to imagine his thoughts as he makes this decision. "Boy, wouldn't those house slippers feel nice when I stop for the night?" "And those tennis shoes sure would be cool during the heat of the day," and "When I get to the other side the dress shoes sure would come in handy for going to nice places." Which shoes should he choose? While the hiking boots may not always be the most comfortable, or the best looking, the protection they offer is more valuable than anything else the other shoes could offer.

Choosing to know Jesus may not be an easy decision. We may not have the easiest life or look the best to the world, but knowing Jesus and walking with Him is so much better for us than anything else in this life apart from Him.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

To go even further, everything I thought was important before I became a Christian I consider to be a loss compared to the wonderful greatness of knowing Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Everything before was like garbage compared to my life with Christ. I have willingly given up everything to be close to Him.

When you believe in Jesus nothing is as important to us as our relationship with Him. Even if someone came and offered us all of the money in the world we would never want to trade our relationship for it. **Knowing Jesus is the greatest thing in life.**

PHILIPPIANS 3:9

and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

To belong to Jesus, no longer trying to be saved by being good enough, but by trusting Christ to save me. Jesus paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross. God's way of making us righteous depends on faith in Jesus Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10,11

that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

To count on Christ alone is the only way to really know Christ and to experience the mighty power that brought Him back to life again. To share in His sufferings and to die to self will make us become more like Him. Through the grace of God through Jesus Christ, He will take us to heaven to live with Him.

Do you want to know Jesus in a real and personal way? Do you want to feel His love and power in your life and to share everything with Him? Life may offer riches and fame but it isn't enough. If you will trust in Jesus He will give you love, peace, and joy. Life is not complete until you put your trust in Him.

We cannot earn our way to heaven by being good enough. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to cleanse us from our sins and to show us the way to heaven. All we have to do is accept His free gift by asking Him to forgive our sins and to come into our hearts as Savior and Lord. **Knowing Jesus is the greatest thing in life.**

Just a Rock?

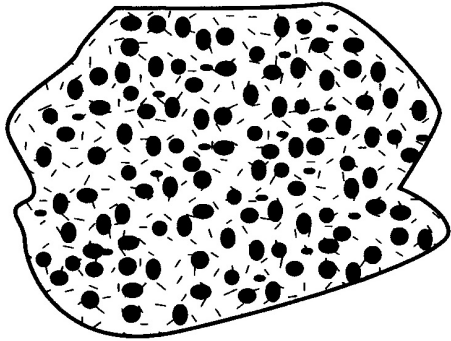
Pass out a "Just a Rock" sheet to each child. Let kids color and cut out the rocks on the worksheet.

They are all rocks, but if someone offered them a choice of any one they wanted, which one would they choose?

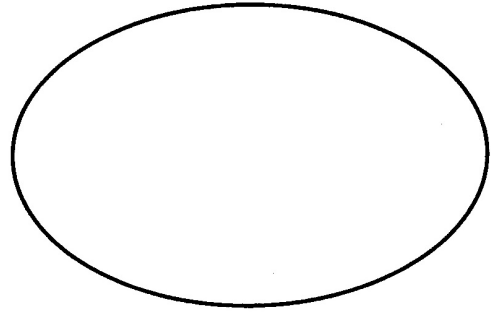
In life, we will be offered different choices of how we should live. We want to make sure that we are making the best choice, which is a life committed to Jesus.

PRAYER

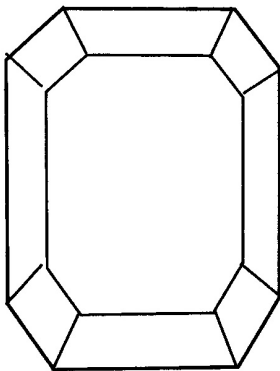
Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to place nothing as more important in their lives than knowing Jesus. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.



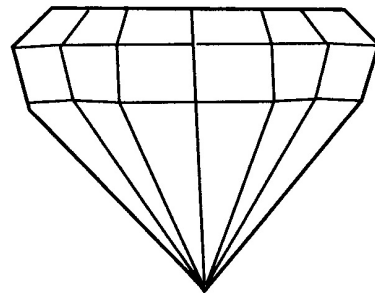
POKEY PUMICE



SMOOTH RIVER ROCK



EMERALD



DIAMOND