**Small Group Devotions**

**Week of October 2, 2016**

**Yearning**

**Philippians 3:4b-14**

Paul has spelled out our future: Jesus. We run this race not on our own ability and achievement or to gain an earthly prize but to gain Christ, knowing Him fully.

* When you think about “knowing” someone, what comes to mind? Who knows you best? Why do they know you so well?
* Is it possible to “know” God?
* Compared to how others may “know” you, how do you think God “knows” you? Is there a difference?

*Supplemental Text: James 1:17-27*

Paul has listed out his gifts and achievements and counted them as rubbish (literally, human excrement) because of Christ. He would see those as merely religion over against a relationship. Can you list out your religious achievements? Why do you think Paul would consider them rubbish?

James helps us understand true religion. Compare and contrast: How does James affirm Paul’s understanding of religion? How do we keep commands like those in James from becoming religion in themselves? How does relationship play into all of this?

Religion

*Supplemental Text: John 17*

All things are rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus our Lord. Knowing God is not a superficial affair, it is an intimate and relational knowledge, like that of a child to a parent or a husband and wife. Why is understanding knowing God like this so important? If knowing Jesus is relational, then what does a real relationship with Jesus look like (following rules or something else)?

John gives us this prayer spoken by Jesus just before He was arrested. It’s a beautiful passage on knowing God. How exactly does one come to “know” God through Jesus? What else struck you in this chapter?

Scripture is the best tool we have to know Jesus. How does that change or affect the way you view Scripture? What role does prayer play in knowing Jesus? How does the church come alongside of these in knowing Jesus more?

Knowing

Personal

**Yearning, cont.**

**Notes**

Have you found yourself struggling with your faith? Is it because you are looking around? Or is it because you’re not really yearning to know God at the cost of everything else?

To know God will take some time. Where are you going to make room in your life for prayer, Scripture and Church?

What’s keeping you from pressing forward to reach the goal of knowing Jesus? How will you cut that out of your life? What can you replace it with that will speed your journey?

Straining

*Supplemental Text: Psalm 63:1-8*

Paul gives vivid imagery of what it looks like to yearn for knowing God with this idea of straining forward with eyes focused on the prize. Do you feel as if you’re straining to reach the goal of knowing Jesus? Are there any temptations in your life that make it difficult to keep your eyes forward?

David wrote a Psalm that shows his deep desire to know God. How does this Psalm challenge you in your daily walk? If you could explain the journey to a new believer, how does a person get to a place where they can write a Psalm like this? Are you at that place?