

# Small Group Notes for The Joy Manual: Hope

# Discovering Together

We live in a credential-conscious society. Those with the right credentials can get into certain places, and those without the right credentials can't. We all know how credentials work. We might not like the hassle, or the barriers credentials create, but we live with the reality that they are needed. We accept the fact that they serve a purpose. Credentials keep the wrong people out and allow the right people in.

What are some of the credentials people hold that help make this world a better and safer place?

# Learning Together

Philippians 3

1. Before Paul became a follower of Christ, what were some of the credentials he held that gave him a false sense of eternal security?

2What are a few of the credentials people have today that might give them a false sense that they will gain entry to heaven?

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made—I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colourless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognised, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer; and labour with power

—A young pastor in Zimbabwe, Africa, later martyred for his faith in Christ, as quoted by Brennan Manning in The Signature of Jesus

3. In light of Phil 3:4-9, how can Paul's example influence the way we view our own credentials and accomplishments?

4. Paul hungered to know Jesus Christ and the power of his resurrection (v. 10). He was willing to do whatever it took to know Christ more fully—even suffer for his faith. What are you doing in your life right now to grow in your knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrection?

5. Why is belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and certainty that we will be raised to eternal life, essential if we are going to live lives of deep surrender to God's will?

6. How does your confidence that you will one day be raised to eternal life influence how you live today?

In Christ, life is intended to have purpose. Perhaps we all too easily become worshipers of life. We may make life itself into an idol. If all our marbles are in the basket called life, death may indeed be the unwanted, purposeless intruder. This is not to say we shouldn't "have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10), as Jesus said. But, to make anything, including life, into the "be all and end all," squeezes God out of the picture. It is our relationship with God in life that enables us to make sense out of seeming nonsense. Even when sense and purpose seem to escape us, we trust that one day we will understand. On that day we will come face to face with the author of life.
—Philip W.Williams, When a Loved One Dies

7. What was Pauls attitude about his past?

8. How did Paul view the unwritten pages of life that were ahead of him?

9. What is something from your past that you need to let go of because it is dragging you down and keeping you from following Christ with your whole heart?

10. How can your small group members pray for you and support you as you seek to leave this in the past?

11. As followers of Christ, we are called to "press on toward the goal to win the prize." What is the goal God calls us to reach?

12. What are you doing to invest your life in seeking this goal?

13. We live in a world with countless sensual enticements crying for our attention. What is one earthly enticement that tends to get your attention and distract you from the things of Christ (v. 19)?

What is one thing you can do to weaken the grip of this earthly thing?

14. Through the power of Jesus Christ, all things can be brought under control (v. 21). What is an area of your life that you see coming more and more under the control of the lordship of Jesus Christ?

# Serving Together

Pray together as a group and celebrate the areas of your lives that are being yielded to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

We all know people who have stopped running and are sitting on the side-lines. Identify one person you care about who has grown weary along the way. Commit to serve them in the following three ways:

1. Pray for them to experience a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit and renewed energy to run the race of faith.

2. Seek an opportunity to encourage them and invite them back into a deep and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

3. If they are carrying a burden that is slowing them down along the way, offer to help them in a practical way that will lessen their burden.