

## “I consider them nothing . . .”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

**Read Philippians 3:4-11**

If you can, watch the YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/s9lwrkHfYck>

The experience of lockdown and the shadow of a pandemic has caused many of us think about our priorities – when we are denied things that we once took for granted, we begin to think about which of them are important and why. This is an aspect of human nature that has never really changed, and around 2000 years ago we find Paul, contained by lockdown, living in the shadow of death, doing exactly the same. As he reflects on what truly matters, he lists off a catalogue of achievements and privileges that have come his way, and then makes a sweeping statement. *“I consider these things as garbage compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ”*. As we reflect on the words of Paul and our own priorities, this raises the inevitable question for us – how important is knowing Jesus for me? You are invited to spend some time reflecting on three questions in the light of what Paul says:

**How well do I know Jesus?** The turning point of Paul's life was the day he encountered Jesus - the day when it dramatically dawned on him that a living relationship with God, through Jesus, was of infinitely more value than all his religious inheritance and activity. Instead of following Jesus, he'd previously done all he could to stop anyone from following Jesus. But that relationship turned his whole priority system upside down. As we perhaps re-set our priorities after the experiences of Covid, before we do, maybe we need to ask ourselves – how well do I know Jesus? How am I cultivating and nurturing my relationship with Jesus? How is that relationship shaping and influencing the person that I am and the person I strive to be? Is this relationship with Jesus as important to me as it should be?

**What difference has knowing Christ made to me?** For Paul, knowing Christ meant living his life in a very different way - perhaps we too need to be challenged about that. But it also meant allowing himself to be declared righteousness, being healed of his guilt and reconciled with those he had harmed. He begins this letter by describing people with very real affection that once he would have considered his sworn enemies. Part of the reason that his early pedigree counted for nothing was because of the person he had become through it. How has knowing Jesus impacted the person you are? In what ways are you different because you are a disciple of Christ?

**What is Christ calling me to become?** Paul declares *“I want to become like him,”* and that will not all be plain sailing – it includes being like him in his sufferings. This is being written by someone who knows the reality of suffering - with his life under threat and his freedom denied, he still seeks to be like Jesus; he still wants the nature of Jesus to shine through. We have all had to learn to live through some very different circumstances in recent months, and our calling is also to be like Jesus in the midst of that struggle. There is that ultimate becoming, that we will realise through that resurrection of which Paul speaks – but as we journey towards that day, what is Christ calling us to become?

### PRAYER

Living Lord Jesus, as I reflect on all of my priorities, my hopes and dreams, my successes and accomplishments, I give you thanks that above all else, I can know you. Help me to know you better, to be shaped by that relationship and to become all that you would have me be. Grant me such a sense of your loving presence, that knowing you will truly matter above anything else. AMEN