



A Well-Defined  
**FAITH**

*[fāth] (noun)*

Biblical words used in church...  
Discover what they really mean.



Sunday  
July 5 2026

Philippians 3:4-11

## Example Teaching Rhythm

### **Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes**

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

### **Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes**

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

### **Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes**

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

### **Prayer: 10 Minutes**

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

## Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

**Highlight** - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

**Explain** - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

**Apply** - This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

**Respond** - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

# “Righteousness”

## To be in a Right Relationship with God

### Introduction

Righteous is one of those words that lands differently depending on who is using it. In ordinary speech it has a slightly smug quality – self-righteous, morally superior, always certain of being on the correct side. In church it lands more favorably but often just as vaguely – a kind of general spiritual goodness, the quality a person has when they have done enough right things and avoided enough wrong ones.

Neither definition is what the Bible is talking about.

The Hebrew and Greek roots – *tsedaqah* and *dikaiosynē* – are relational before they are moral. They describe not a person who has achieved a standard of behavior, but a person who stands in a right relationship – correctly positioned before God, with the standing that makes genuine relationship possible. Righteousness is not something you perform. It is something you receive. That distinction changes everything.

Paul understood this better than most. He had every credential a person could accumulate – the most credentialed version of Jewish religious life available. And by the time he writes to the Philippians, he has concluded that every bit of it was working against him. Not because the law was wrong, but because he had been using it to build something God never intended: a righteousness he could point to, that made him the source rather than the recipient.

Philippians 3 is a man holding up the record he was proudest of – and declaring it loss. Not because the things themselves were bad. Because he had found something they could never give him: a righteousness that comes from God, received through faith, on the basis of what Christ has done.

The honest question this passage presses is not whether you believe in righteousness. The question is whether you are still trying to build your own – and what it would cost you to receive the one Paul is describing.

Before we go further: Where are you still pointing to your own record – your service, your consistency, your moral seriousness – as the thing that makes you right with God? And what would it look like to count that as loss, not because it is worthless, but because something better has been offered?

## Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- When you feel spiritually close to God, what do you attribute it to? When you feel distant, what do you blame?
- Paul had a genuinely impressive résumé. Is there a version of your own – church history, moral consistency, doctrinal knowledge – that you quietly believe earns you something?
- What is the difference between righteousness as a standard to meet vs a relationship to receive? Where do you feel that difference most?
- What would have to change about the way you approach God if your standing before Him depended entirely on what Christ has done rather than what you have done?
- Is there a version of spiritual effort in your life that has quietly become the thing you trust rather than the Christ it was meant to respond to?

When Edmund Hillary summited Everest in 1953, he brought years of training, technical gear, and weeks of acclimatization. The preparation was real. But none of it produced the summit – the mountain determined whether anyone reached the top. His achievement was genuine. The summit was not something he manufactured. It was something he was allowed to reach.

- That is the shape of what Paul is describing. Righteousness before God is not a summit you reach by accumulating enough. It is a place you are brought to – by someone who crossed the distance you could not.

## Highlight | Philippians 3:4-11

Philippians 3 is Paul at his most personally exposed. Writing from prison, he is warning against people insisting that proper standing before God requires additional religious credentials. His response is not to dismiss credentials – it is to produce his own, then bury them.

Every item on the list was a genuine marker of status: circumcised on the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, trained as a Pharisee, so zealous he had persecuted the church, blameless by the standard of law-keeping. This was the record of someone who had done everything the system asked.

And Paul calls it loss. Not insufficient – loss. The Greek *zēmia* means financial damage, the thing that leaves you worse off than when you started. Pursued as a means of standing before God on his own terms, these things actively worked against him – convincing him he was building something he wasn't.

What he wants instead is to be found in Christ – not discovered, but located, belonging to. Righteousness not his own, but received through faith. And then the sentence the passage has been building toward: to know Him. In resurrection power and shared suffering, conformed to His death.

- Paul doesn't say his credentials were insufficient – he says they were loss. What is the difference? Is there anything you've been treating as a spiritual asset that might be functioning as a substitute?
- What does it mean to be "found in Christ" as a standing, not a location? How does that differ from being found doing the right things?

## Explain | Consider the Context

Philippians was written to a church Paul loved deeply – one that had walked with him through difficulty and was now facing pressure from teachers insisting that full standing before God required something more than faith in Christ. His response is not defensive. It is doxological. The contrast between what he had been building and what was being offered produces not anxiety but joy.

Dikaïosynē – righteousness – is a relational category before it is a moral one. In the Hebrew tradition, it described right standing before the One the covenant was with. Not moral perfection. Correct position.

Paul's argument is that righteousness is now received through union with Christ rather than constructed through conformity to a standard. This relocates behavior from earning to responding. The righteous person is not the one who has done enough – it is the one who stands in right relationship with God, and whose life flows outward from that standing.

- What does it reveal about human nature that even the most earnest religious effort can become a substitute for the relationship it was meant to serve?
- What changes about the posture you bring to spiritual life if righteousness comes from God rather than from you?

## Apply | Discuss as a Group

The practical problem with righteousness is not that people reject it. It is that they pursue it in the wrong direction – not dramatically, but quietly, in the texture of ordinary spiritual life. The person who prays more when they feel guilty. The person who serves harder when they sense distance from God. The person whose confidence before God rises and falls with recent performance. These are not failures of belief. They are the natural gravitational pull toward a self-constructed righteousness Paul is explicitly calling loss.

The shift he describes is not from discipline to passivity – knowing Christ includes sharing in His suffering and being conformed to His death. But the ground is different. The person working to be found in Christ is not the same as the person working to be found adequate. One is responding to a relationship already established. The other is still trying to establish it.

The diagnostic question is not what you believe about righteousness. It is what your prayer sounds like when things go wrong. Does it sound like a child returning to a Father whose love doesn't depend on recent performance – or an employee hoping recent failures won't override the longer record?

- Where does your sense of standing before God rise and fall with your own performance? What would it look like to let the righteousness that comes from God be the stable ground?
- Is there a spiritual discipline or track record you are quietly depending on to make you right with God? What would it cost to stop asking it to do something only Christ can do?

## Respond | How should I live/pray?

Philippians 3 does not end in arrival. Paul presses on – toward resurrection, toward knowing Christ more fully. The righteousness he has received is not a destination. It is a standing he has been given and a relationship he is still moving deeper into.

That movement does not produce anxiety. It produces joy – which is what the whole letter keeps returning to. The person no longer working to construct their own standing before God is free in a way the person still building their record is not. Free to fail without losing their footing. Free to serve without keeping score. Free to bring actual confusion and actual sin into prayer rather than curating a version of themselves they hope God will find acceptable.

The righteousness that comes from God through faith is not a lowered standard. It is a gift given to people who could not have met the standard – which is everyone. The person who has genuinely received it does not relax toward sin. They find themselves drawn toward Christ in a way that changes the whole structure of spiritual effort: not straining to earn a standing, but responding to one already given.

That is what it means to be found in Him. Not found performing well. Found there – belonging, received, positioned rightly – by grace.

- What would change about your prayer life this week if you began not with what you have or haven't done, but with the fact that your standing before God rests entirely on Christ's righteousness?
- Is there a season of failure or a part of your history that has made you feel less qualified before God? What would it look like to bring that specifically before Him this week?

## Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

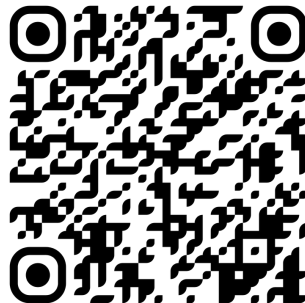
## Additional Commentary

- On dikaiosynē – "righteousness": The word describes right standing within a covenant relationship – being correctly positioned before the God the covenant is with. Not first a moral achievement but a relational condition. This standing cannot be self-constructed; it can only be received from the one the relationship is with.
- On zēmia – "loss" (v.7-8): The word carries financial connotation – damage, a net negative. Paul is not saying his credentials were worthless in themselves. He is saying that pursued as a means of self-justification, they were costing him the one thing they could never give him. Gain turned loss because it was being used for the wrong purpose.
- On heurethō – "found in him" (v.9): The verb is passive – to be discovered in a particular location. Paul is not describing what he is doing but where he is being located. The righteousness that follows is not something he has produced but something he inhabits because of where he is found.
- On gnōnai – "to know" (v.10): The Greek carries the sense of intimate, experiential knowledge rather than intellectual acquaintance. This knowing comes from shared experience – including suffering – and is itself the goal, not merely the means to something else.
- On "resurrection power and fellowship of his sufferings" (v.10): Paul does not separate these. The same union with Christ that brings resurrection power brings participation in His suffering. Righteousness received through faith does not produce a comfortable life. It produces a life being conformed to the one whose righteousness it is.
- On katantēsō – "attain" (v.11): Paul holds his hope with appropriate tentativeness: "if somehow I may attain." This is not doubt about the promise. It is the posture of someone who knows that what he is pressing toward is given, not manufactured.

## Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources.**

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



# Additional Study

## Watch/Listen

### Bible Project - **Philippians**



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Philippians**.

### Bible Project - **Righteousness**



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into **Righteousness**.

## Overview

### Enduring Word - **Philippians 3**



Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings over **Philippians 3**.

### Got Questions - **Righteousness**



Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, podcasts and more on **Righteousness**.

## Expand

### Bible Reference - **Philippians**



Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of **Philippians 3**.

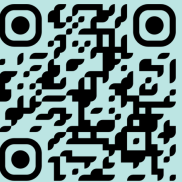
### Bible Hub - **Philippians 3**



Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on **Philippians 3**.

## Deepen

### Logos Factbook - **Righteous**



Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about **Righteousness**.

### Blue Letter Bible - **Righteous**



Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on **Righteousness**.

