

FRANCIS CHAN: Sold Out to Jesus



Table of Contents

▼ Click on a session you'd like to see ▼

**2 Session 1: Rejoice in the Lord, Not
in What You've Done**
Participant's Guide

7 Session 2: Consider Everything Loss
Participant's Guide

14 Session 3: Suffering with Christ
Participant's Guide



LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 1

Rejoice in the Lord, Not in What You've Done

The surpassing greatness of Christ is worth our everything.

Philippians 3:10 shows us that fellowship with Christ often comes through suffering. Although we tend to see suffering as a bad thing, this passage shows that it can actually be a blessing. As we are consumed by Jesus and Jesus alone, we begin to understand what really matters in life.

Scripture: Philippians 3:1–11

Featuring: The sermon "Living with Jesus," by Francis Chan, PreachingToday.com



Note To Leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study. Open this session by reading Philippians 3:1–11 and then showing the first video clip. Then ask the following questions.



As a group, watch clip one. After the clip is finished, discuss the following questions together.

Part One Identify the Issue

- [Q] What would your life look like if you were obsessed with Jesus?
- [Q] Give an example of when you or someone you know rejoiced in the Lord, even when things weren't going well.
- [Q] Those Paul talked about in Philippians 3 felt that circumcision was the way to find acceptance with God. What might be a modern-day example of something we do to try to find acceptance with God?



[Q] Should we ever feel pleased with ourselves spiritually? Why or why not?

Teaching Point One: Rejoice in the Lord.

We rarely hear the word *rejoice* outside of Christian circles. It's not a concept that most people can relate to. A person usually talks about being happy or maybe even feeling joy, but few people say they rejoiced about something. And even if they did say that, it's usually when something good has happened—something that is going their way.

But Paul told the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord (3:1). He knew they, like most of the Christians in the early churches, would suffer persecution and trouble for their faith. Regardless of what they were going through, he wanted them to rejoice. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24.

[Q] What do you think Paul meant when he said to “rejoice always”? What would that look like in your life?

[Q] What about “praying without ceasing”? How are we supposed to do that?

[Q] Give an example of something you could thank God for right now, even though it seems hard to you.

Teaching Point Two: Don't trust in your own goodness to gain acceptance with God.

Those Paul was talking about in Philippians 3 felt that everyone should be circumcised in order to find acceptance with God. He not only warned his readers about these teachers, but called them dogs and evil workers. He clearly felt that anyone who listened to them would be led astray.

Read Romans 2:25–29.

[Q] According to verse 25, what is wrong with trusting in circumcision for acceptance with God?

Leader's Note: Since circumcision is part of the Old Testament law, it would buy us acceptance if we kept all the rest of the law. But we fail in this regard, so it becomes worthless. Eugene Peterson puts it this way, “Circumcision ... is great if you live in accord with God's law. But if you don't, it's worse than not being circumcised. ... Better to keep God's law uncircumcised than break it circumcised.”



- [Q] What ways do you trust in something you've done to gain acceptance with God?
- [Q] What is the circumcision of the heart that Paul talks about in verse 29?
- [Q] Read Galatians 6:15. What new creation is he referring to?
- [Q] Francis Chan says, "We are the true circumcision, the real thing—we who worship by the Spirit of God." What do you think it means to worship by the Spirit of God?
- [Q] Chan also said, "True followers of God are the ones who trust in him, the ones who glory in what he has done." What are some practical ways we can glory in what God has done?
- [Q] What warning signs do you notice in your life when you are becoming spiritually proud?
- [Q] How can we stay humble and grateful to God?

Part Two

Apply Your Findings

Francis Chan said, "The real followers of Yahweh put no confidence in the flesh." This is clear throughout the Book of Philippians.

Action Point: Set aside time this week to read through the entire Book of Philippians. As you read, write down all the ways we are told to trust in God rather than our own strength and wisdom.

—Study by JoHannah Reardon

Optional Activity

Consider doing this activity during your time together

Purpose:

To help you think through your personality type so that you can figure out where you might be tempted to become spiritually proud.

Activity:

Tami Rudkin asks the following question on SmallGroups.com: Which of the following colorful names would best describe your personality? Why?

Gung Ho! Gregory

Slow as a herd of turtles Sam

Nervous Nellie

Sharp as a tack Shane

Sparkplug Sally

Dancin' Dina

Better Late than Never Bill

Devoted Dan

Passionate Patsy

Steady Stan

Hilarious Hanna

Studious Sara

Share your answer with the group and name one way you could be tempted to become spiritually proud.



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

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Part One

Identify the Issue

Teaching Point One: Rejoice in the Lord.

Teaching Point Two: Don't trust in your own goodness to gain acceptance with God.



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LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 2

Consider Everything Loss

Nothing in this world compares to knowing and walking with Jesus.

Not only does Paul count his lineage as loss, he counts everything as loss. Why? Because he knows that nothing compares to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus. Christ's greatness is so wonderful Paul says he was willing to suffer the loss of everything. Then Paul goes a step further. He writes, "I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ."

Scripture: Philippians 3:1–11

Featuring: The sermon "Living with Jesus," by Francis Chan, PreachingToday.com



Note To Leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study. Open this session by reading Philippians 3:3–9 and then showing the second video clip. Then ask the following questions.



As a group, watch clip two. After the clip is finished, discuss the following questions together.

Part One

Identify the Issue

- [Q]** What parts of your life do you consider loss since becoming a Christian? In other words, what was important to you before that no longer seems important?
- [Q]** Have you always been a church attender? If so, when did church become more meaningful for you?
- ▶ If not, when did you become a church attender and why?



[Q] Francis Chan doesn't like the translation "rubbish" in verse 8. What other words could we use in its place?

Teaching Point One: Put no hope in your spiritual achievements.

Johnny V. Miller shares the following from his sermon, "The Great Rescue," (PreachingToday.com):

When I was a teenager, I became fascinated, appalled, and grieved by the literature of the Holocaust ... One scene that haunts me is a picture from Auschwitz. Above the entryway to the concentration camp were the words, *Arbeit macht frei*. The same thing stood above the camp at Dachau. It means, "work makes free"—work will liberate you and give you freedom.

It was a lie—a false hope. The Nazis made the people believe hard work would equal liberation, but the promised "liberation" was horrifying suffering and even death.

Arbeit macht frei. One reason that phrase haunts me is because it is the spiritual lie of this age. It is a satanic lie. It's a religious lie. It is a false hope—an impossible dream for many people in the world. They believe their good works will be great enough to outweigh their bad works, allowing them to stand before God in eternity and say, "You owe me the right to enter into your heaven."

It is the hope of every false religion—*arbeit macht frei*. But it's the love of God that liberates. It's the blood of Jesus Christ that liberates. He died in my place, and I am free.

[Q] Many of us have cut our Christian teeth on the fact that we are saved by grace, not by works (Eph. 2:8–9), but sometimes it's hard to remember that as we begin serving Christ in the church. What are some ways you feel that you are trying to earn God's approval?

[Q] How can we find balance and a proper attitude in our serving?

▶ What do you think Paul would have said about that (Phil. 3:9–10)?

[Q] What is the difference between working for a spiritual reward in heaven and working for spiritual recognition on earth? How can you tell the difference in your own life?

Teaching Point Two: The Christian life is about knowing Jesus, not getting something from him.

In his book *The Prodigal God*, best-selling author and pastor Timothy Keller offers the following story to illustrate our teaching point:

Once upon a time there was a gardener who grew an enormous carrot. So he took it to his king and said, "My Lord, this is the greatest carrot I've ever grown or ever will grow. Therefore I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you." The king was touched and discerned the man's heart, so as [the gardener] turned to go the king said, "Wait! You are clearly a good steward of the earth. I own a plot of land right next to yours. I want to give it to you freely as a gift so you can garden it all." And the gardener was amazed and delighted and went home rejoicing. But there was a nobleman at the king's court who overheard all this. And he said, "My! If that is what you get for a carrot—what if you gave the king something better?" So the next day the nobleman came before the king and he was leading a handsome black stallion. He bowed low and said, "My lord, I breed horses and this is the greatest horse I have ever bred or ever will. Therefore I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you." But the king discerned his heart and said thank you, and took the horse and merely dismissed him. The nobleman was perplexed. So the king said, "Let me explain. That gardener was giving me the carrot, but you were giving yourself the horse."¹

[Q] What are some ways that we try to manipulate God to do what we want?

Read Luke 14:25–33.

[Q] What do you think Jesus meant when he said we must hate father, mother, wife, and children to be his disciples?

The following account from *CHRISTIAN HISTORY* magazine may best illustrate this:

In Naples, Thomas [Aquinas] possessed his own residence, his own retinue, and a host of servants. With plumes and flowing silks, he took up riding on horseback around the bay.

He visited the Blue Grotto and Capri. He had a taste for beauty and liked to repeat Augustine's saying: "If the work of His hands be so lovely, O how much more beautiful must be He who made them."...

Then quite suddenly, saying nothing to his parents, he embraced the Dominican Order of Preachers, put on their white and black habit, and announced that his titles were henceforth in abeyance. He seemed hardly aware of the furor that would inevitably arise from his action.

His mother complained to the Pope and the Archbishop of Naples. He had been a prince and was now vowed to mendicancy as a wandering friar, and he did not care. The Pope offered to make him Lord Abbot of Montecassino with the privilege of wearing his Dominican habit. He refused and wandered alone to Rome. His mind was made up.

¹ Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God* (Dutton, 2008), pp. 60-61.



Years afterwards, when he came to write the *Summa Theologica*, he wrote beneath the question: “Whether duties toward parents are to be set aside for the sake of religion?” the simple answer: “Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy to follow Me,” and he quoted from Jerome’s famous letter to Heliodorus: “Though your father fling himself down on the doorstep, trample him underfoot, go your way and fly with dry eyes to the standard of the Cross.”²

[Q] What do you think it means to carry our cross (v. 27)?

[Q] What do our lives look like when we “give up everything” (v. 34)? Explain your answer.

- ▶ Sell all our possessions and live in poverty.
- ▶ Give away most of our money—keep the bare minimum to live on.
- ▶ Be willing to give up everything if Christ calls us to.
- ▶ Treat our possessions as if they are borrowed, rather than our own.
- ▶ Other.

[Q] Francis Chan says, “We have found a treasure in a field so wonderful that we can hardly believe it. We say, ‘Are you telling me I can have a relationship with the Creator of the universe? That he’ll forgive me of everything I’ve ever done? That he’ll welcome me into this eternal kingdom? Give it to me! Give it to me, and take everything else!’” In what ways do you feel you’ve experienced this?

- ▶ In what ways have you failed to experience this?

[Q] Chan also said, “I want to know the power of Jesus’ resurrection.” What areas of your life do you need to have the power of his resurrection?

Optional Activity

*Consider
doing this activity
during your time
together*

Purpose:

To help us see how we can apply the power of the resurrection to the circumstances of life.

Activity:

Explain to each of the people below how the power of the resurrection can help them in their present circumstances:

- **Nora has never felt loved, so she is always looking for the “perfect” friend, both male and female. Everyone disappoints her.**
- **Mason can’t find a job, even though he’s applied for many. He’s starting to feel it will never happen.**
- **Pamela feels called to missions, but she can’t stand the thought of raising support.**

² Robert Payne, *The Fathers of the Western Church* (Viking, 1951). As seen in “Left Behind,” *CHRISTIAN HISTORY* (Issue 73), p.11



Part Two

Apply Your Findings

Francis Chan said, “People are coming to church in droves, thinking, *I’ll take Jesus if he’ll make me rich. I’ll take Jesus if I get to keep all the things I have. I’ll take Jesus if I get to maintain this lifestyle. I’ll take Jesus if I get to hold on to some of these sins, these immoral relationships. I’ll take Jesus if I can still be popular, still have this, still have that.*”

Action Point: Set aside time this week to think about which of these “I’ll take Jesus if...” statements you may be making. Then look up what Scripture has to say on that topic, using a concordance or BibleGateway.com and ask God to make you willing to take Jesus no matter what.

—Study by JoHannah Reardon

¹ Skye Jethani, *The Divine Commodity* (Zondervan, 2009), pp. 113–114.



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Session 2

Consider Everything Loss

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Scripture: Philippians 3:1–11

Featuring: The sermon "Living with Jesus," by Francis Chan, PreachingToday.com



Part One

Identify the Issue

Teaching Point One: Put no hope in your spiritual achievements.

Teaching Point Two: The Christian life is about knowing Jesus, not getting something from him.

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- ▶ Other.



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LEADER'S GUIDE

Session 3

Suffering with Christ

We never want to think about this part of the Christian life.

Philippians 3:10 shows us that fellowship with Christ often comes through suffering. Although we tend to see suffering as a bad thing, this passage shows that it can actually be a blessing. As we are consumed by Jesus and Jesus alone, we begin to understand what really matters in life.

Scripture: Philippians 3:1–11

Featuring: The sermon “Living with Jesus,” by Francis Chan, PreachingToday.com



Note To Leader: Provide each person with the Participant's Guide included at the end of this study. Open this session with the third video clip. Then ask the following questions.



As a group, watch clip three. After the clip is finished, discuss the following questions together.

Part One

Identify the Issue

[Q] Francis Chan said, “At that time the church was creating a new brand of Christianity that said you could call yourself a Christian or a follower of Jesus without necessarily having to follow him—that somehow you could be a follower of Christ and yet look nothing like him.” Were those the terms you came to Christ on? If so, has anything happened since you came to Christ to challenge that conception?



[Q] Chan asks, “Can you imagine that type of intimacy with Jesus? As someone hammers a nail into his hands and he’s screaming, and then they do it to you, can you imagine looking at each other? Can you imagine the fellowship of sharing in that type of suffering together?” How would you answer his questions?

[Q] Chan also tells the story of Bruce Olsen, the missionary whose life was threatened. Olsen said that he experienced the cross like never before—like there was a fellowship being shared that could only happen in suffering. Have you ever experienced such fellowship with Jesus when you’ve gone through something difficult? If so, tell us about it.

[Q] Do you think we should ask for suffering? Why or why not?

Teaching Point One: Learn from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Besides Daniel, three young men came in captivity from Judah to Babylon. Everything they had known was destroyed, including the temple where they worshiped God. All seemed to be lost, but they refused to compromise their beliefs. Read Daniel 3.

[Q] What strikes you most about this story?

[Q] Can you think of any modern equivalents to what Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experienced?

[Q] What can you take away from this story to apply to your life?

Teaching Point Two: Learn from Stephen.

Stephen was a deacon in the early church. He was declared “full of faith and the Holy Spirit” and chosen to help feed the hungry (Acts 6:5). But God had even more in mind for him. Read Acts 6:8–7:3 and 7:48–60.

[Q] What impresses you about Stephen’s life and death?

[Q] Can you think of any modern equivalents to Stephen?

[Q] What can you take away from his story to apply to your life?



Part Two

Apply Your Findings

Francis Chan said, “We need to be honest with God. It’s not like we’re going to trick him! Maybe we need to start with this prayer: *God, I actually like Jesus. I want some more Jesus, but not to the point of suffering.* Be honest and tell him that. Tell him that’s not your heart right now, but that you would like to be that obsessed with Jesus. Tell him you’re not there yet. Tell him you don’t want Christ’s suffering. Tell him you don’t want his sacrifice. Tell him you don’t want his poverty. Tell him you don’t want his persecution. Tell him you want the crown of gold without the crown of thorns. Tell him you want to know the power of his resurrection, but that you want to skip the suffering part. But then tell him that you know that’s not right. Tell him that you want to be consumed with Christ, and you believe he’s better than your comfort. And someday soon, maybe you’ll be at the point where you come before God and pray, God, I believe there is more of you to experience through suffering. I know that once the suffering comes, I won’t enjoy it as much as I thought I might. But I don’t want to end my life so comfortably. I want to know Christ. I want to know his power, and I want to know his suffering. I want to somehow attain the power of resurrection. I want it all. I want everything of Jesus.”

Action Point: Set aside time this week to pray what Francis Chan suggests in the paragraph above. And after you’ve spent time praying about it, get together with a friend and talk about your struggles and encouragements in praying this way.

—Study by JoHannah Reardon

Optional Activity

Consider doing this activity during your time together

Purpose:

To help us think about what hinders our walk with Christ.

Activity:

Provide everyone with pen and paper. Ask them to write down three things that they would most have trouble living without. It can be material things, such as a car or house. Or it can be recreational things such as watching sports, movies, or reading books. It could be relationships, such as a good friend, spouse, or child.

When they’ve completed their list, ask them if any of those things are hindering their walk with Christ. Are any of those things harder to give up than their relationship with Christ? If so, ask them to spend time grappling with that this week.



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Teaching Point Two: Learn from Stephen.

Part Two

Apply Your Findings

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part. But then tell him that you know that's not right. Tell him that you want to be consumed with Christ, and you believe he's better than your comfort. And someday soon, maybe you'll be at the point where you come before God and pray, God, I believe there is more of you to experience through suffering. I know that once the suffering comes, I won't enjoy it as much as I thought I might. But I don't want to end my life so comfortably. I want to know Christ. I want to know his power, and I want to know his suffering. I want to somehow attain the power of resurrection. I want it all. I want everything of Jesus."

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