

## Village Guide

**Current Series:** Vivid (#5)

**Texts:** Philippians 3.7-16; 4.4-9 CEB

**Core Value Focus:** Transformation

### Big Ideas from the Message:

- Big Idea: As our image of God is transformed in friendship with Jesus, our stories are redefined by gratitude.
  - “We are shaped by our stories. In fact, our stories, once in place, determine much of our behavior without regard to their accuracy or helpfulness. Once these stories are stored in our minds, they stay there largely unchallenged until we die. And here is the main point: these narratives are running (and often ruining) our lives. That is why it is crucial to get the right narratives” (James Brian Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*, p. 25).
  - Philippians 3.7-16 CEB was read
- Jesus is less interested in what we’ve accomplished and more invested in our transformation.
- As we more vividly see the beauty of God in Christ, nothing compares.
  - Paul uses a cuss word to get the point across. We typically translate it as ‘sewer trash,’ ‘dung,’ or ‘rubbish.’ In ancient Greek, it’s the word: skubalon (σκύβαλον) – “In secular Greek this depressing word means rubbish and muck of many kinds: excrement, rotten food, bits left at a meal as not worth eating, a rotting corpse. Nastiness and decay are the constant elements of its meaning; it is a coarse, ugly, violent word implying worthlessness, uselessness, and repulsiveness... The only NT usage is Paul’s in Phil 3:8, where he says of all the natural and religious privileges which once seemed sweet and precious, and all the things he has lost since becoming a Christian, “I count (estimate, evaluate) them as (nothing but) dung.” The coarse and violent word shows how completely Paul had ceased to value them” (*New International Dictionary of N.T. Theology* Vol. 1, Zondervan: 1980, pg 480).
- Gratitude invites us into the present moment with Jesus.
  - Phil. 4.4-9 CEB was read
- Practicing gratitude reframes our anxieties (shame narratives) by helping us name the good things.
- One suggested way to experiment with gratitude was...
  - #1 List of 3 things you are grateful for
  - #2 Ask Jesus to help you to be surprised by gratefulness throughout the day
  - #3 Reflect on your morning list and any new gratitude moments before bed

### CONNECT (5 min)

- Question chosen for group discussion or someone pre-invited to share their story. (Optional)

### HEAR (5 min)

- Spend some time in your group sharing what you recall from Sunday’s message. Give a loose theme or subject of the sermon to jumpstart everyone’s thoughts and recollections. (Example: *On Sunday, Kurt (or another speaker) started/continued our series. Who was there on Sunday? Can you recap the content for us? What struck you, and what questions did it leave you with?*)
- Read Philippians 3.7-16 (CEB). What did Kurt say that this passage reveals about God? About us? Do you see anything differently or that wasn’t mentioned in this particular sermon?

**TALK (20 min)**

*Note: This format is intentionally less linear in an effort to generate discussion. It is not meant to be followed left-to-right, nor do all the questions need to be asked. As a facilitator, stewarding good discussion means modeling **true listening**, which also means a conversation without an agenda. Use your discernment to see what your group needs to talk about.*

<i>Conceptual</i>	<i>Practical Implications</i>	<i>Spiritual Formation</i>
Scripture	Regular Life	Transformation
<p>Paul, as a good first century Jew, never renounces his Jewish identity. Likely, he continued to practice kosher eating habits and keeping other practices that the Torah (Law) demanded even after adopting Jesus as his Messiah. However, he is adamant about two things: 1) Gentiles should not ever become like Jews! They become part of God’s family apart from following the Law. 2) For Jews and Gentiles alike, Christ has redefined reality and is redeeming the world through his presence in the church communities. So, as you read Philippians 3.7-16, what compels Paul to call all of his ‘credentials’ “sewer trash?” Does he actually believe that these things are bad in-and-of themselves or is something else going on here?</p> <p>Tease out the theme of gratitude in Philippians 3.7-16. How does this idea come through this text? What else do you know about the letter to the Philippians regarding this theme?</p> <p>What does Paul seem to say the relationship between anxiety and gratitude is in Philippians 4.4-9? Do you think that Paul is saying to ignore anxiety or is there something deeper here? How does our imagination play into Paul’s insight in this passage?</p>	<p>What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word ‘gratitude?’ Why does it conjure up this sort of idea or image within you?</p> <p>Do you ever feel the drive to be accomplished in a certain area? Does this ever go into overdrive? Does a lack of accomplishment bring shame? How do we take into account that nothing we can do compares with the gift of knowing Jesus as friend, teacher, and Lord?</p> <p>If Jesus were to invite you into a season of intentional gratitude to God for things in your life, where would you start? What areas of life immediately come to mind that are gifts? Can you imagine these gifts finding their ultimate source in Jesus? (Village Guide: This is not about blessings versus curses or any other theology that privileges one person over another. Rather, this is an invitation to all of us to notice where Jesus is at work in our particular context and to name it w/ gratitude.)</p> <p>A great challenge for many people is to lean fully into the present moment. In what ways do you struggle to be present in the ‘regular’ or even ‘mundane’ parts of life? How might reframing our lives around gratitude for God’s goodness and love transform your ability to be present with Jesus and others?</p>	<p><i>Take a few minutes of silence to think of what your current experience of life these past couple weeks have been like. (Give a few minutes for reflection before asking the question).</i></p> <p>What do you sense Jesus wants you to notice and be grateful for, with him?</p> <p>How might we, as a group and as individuals, consider practicing the presence of Jesus in a spirit of gratitude? What do you think of some version of Kurt’s example from the end of the sermon? Do you have another idea?</p> <p>How has it been for you to notice Jesus this past week? How might practicing gratitude help you to notice him in a new way?</p>

(Space for your own questions or notes)

**LIVE (20 min)**

- How might this conversation impact you this next week? What are you taking with you?
- How might we pray for each other based on this conversation and other highs/lows in life?