



Small Group Study Guide

# THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3

## Beware of Dogs!

<sup>1</sup>John R. W. Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today: Message of Acts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 147.

1. Paul begins this section with once again encouraging the church to “rejoice in the Lord.” One commentary has said that this phrase means: “Let the Lord be the one who makes you happy.”<sup>1</sup>
  - Do you agree or disagree with this interpretation of the meaning of “Rejoice in the Lord”? Why or why not?
  - Practically speaking, what does it look like to “rejoice in the Lord”?
2. Paul keeps bringing it up for the church to “rejoice,” as if there is the constant threat that Christians can move away from this into a state of grumbling, criticizing or despondency. What are some of the things that can steal you away from rejoicing in the Lord?
3. Explain the relationship between Paul’s use of the terms “dogs,” “evil workers” and “the false circumcision.” Are they all relating to the same group? If so, who? If not, who does each group represent?
4. In today’s church culture in America, who is the equivalent of the dogs, the evil workers and the false circumcision? Explain your answer.

Don’t Forget:

*Discuss the Sermon Notes from this week*

5. Paul uses a rare and unusual description for the followers of Christ in this passage. He refers to believers as “the true circumcision.”  
Read Genesis 17:1-14.

- What does God ask of Abraham (v.1)?
- What does God promise specifically to Abram which led to God changing his name to Abraham (v. 2-5)?
- What promise does God make to Abraham and his descendents (v. 7)?
- What was the sign that Abraham and his male descendents were asked to do to keep the covenant God made with them (v. 10-14)?
- Based on Genesis 17 and the covenant relationship God established with Abraham and his descendants, what is meant by the church being the “true circumcision”? Support your answer with Scripture.

6. In your own words, what message of hope is contained in the followers of Christ being identified as the “true circumcision”?

7. What is the relationship between our understanding that we are the covenant people of God, through faith in Christ, and Paul's urging us to rejoice in the Lord always?

### **BIBLE MEMORY:**

*For we are the true  
circumcision, who  
worship in the Spirit of  
God and glory in Christ  
Jesus and put no  
confidence in the flesh.*

*Philippians 3:3*

8. Those who are the true circumcision are described by three actions. Describe what is meant by each of these, and give an example of how that looks in daily living.

- Worshipping in the Spirit of God:
- Glorifying in Christ Jesus:
- Putting no confidence in the flesh:

**For Next Week:  
Prayerfully meditate and study the following: Philippians 1:4-11**