



December 3rd, 2017 Discussion Guide

A Christmas Carol: “Christmas Past”

Philippians 3:12-14

Introduction

The past can mean many things to many people. For some it brings warm thoughts. For others, it can be a painful trip down memory lane, reliving past hurts and failures. Guilt from past sin can be a major joy-killer as well as an impediment to a confident relationship with Christ. Christ came that first Christmas Past, to redeem our past, forgive our sin, relieve our guilt, restore us to God, and give us an unshackled present and future. Has he accomplished that in your life?

Discussion Questions

1. <http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/280392/Christmas-Carol-A-Movie-Clip-Old-Fezziwig.html> If you have a means to show it, you could watch this clip from a 1938 version of A Christmas Carol. [or find a version you like better] Scrooge is able to relive his boyhood apprenticeship with kind and benevolent Mr. Fezziwig. Share some of your very fondest memories of Christmas past with the group. Do the people involved in those memories know how much they mean to you?
2. Those not yet following Jesus, but having a desire to become Christian, will often remark, “I have done too many bad things to ever become a follower of Jesus – I don’t think he could ever forgive me. I can’t even forgive myself.” Or they might say, “I want to do this the right way, so I want to clean up my life and change all my bad habits *before* I come to Christ.” Have you ever had such thoughts, even as a present follower of Jesus? Do you ever doubt Christ’s forgiveness of particular sins in your life? Why does that doubt linger? How can you help people who express such thoughts to you?



3. The Apostle Paul was an amazing reclamation project when it comes to a life being transformed by God for the better. He went from persecutor of the church, to planter of churches. Somehow, he was able to believe grace and forgiveness, and put guilt behind him. Read what he says about God reclaiming his life for good purposes. I Timothy 4:12-17 and Philippians 3:12-16. What was the key to Paul believing that Christ had forgiven him? In Philippians, Paul refers to believers as being 'perfect'. In what way are we as believers 'perfect', even in the midst of our failures?

4. One aspect of letting go of guilt from the past, is to make sure that as much as is possible, you have made amends with those people who have been hurt by your sin. Can you relate a time when you were suffering from guilt, and you returned to a person you had offended, asked and received forgiveness, and the guilt was relieved? Have you extended forgiveness to another, and seen their relief?

Moving Forward: *Discuss how you can move on from past regrets and into a confident present and future that demonstrates the transforming power of Christ. Are there people you need to go back and ask their forgiveness? Are there those needing to hear that you forgive them for hurts in the past? We need to be as eager to extend forgiveness as we are to receive it.*