

Dear Open Door Family,

You may not know this about me but there are times when I face doubts and insecurity. I cover it pretty well and it does not cripple me, but in moments of tiredness or stress my fears can loom pretty large. When I first started ministry, which I did in a roundabout way, I did not have the normal “credentials” and “degrees” which many of my peers had. This did not matter a lot in South America when we first started ministry. But when Carol and I returned to the USA and continued in ministry it did not take me long to realize that many times the first questions I was asked was: What seminary did you go to? or What degrees do you have? For someone who did not even have a BA at the time that was hard for me. That is when a passage like Philippians 3 was so encouraging. Paul was a man with ALL the right CREDENTIALS. He had been raised in the best Jewish tradition, and he had studied in all the right places and received the most prestigious degrees. Yet when he came face to face with Jesus Christ none of that mattered any more. God used Paul’s learning and training but his Jewish “credentials” were no longer important. Let’s look at these verses together.

Philippians 3:7-11 (NLT) *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. [8] Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ [9] and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith. [10] I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, [11] so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

Philippians 3:7-9 (JBP) *Yet every advantage that I had gained I considered lost for Christ's sake. Yes, and I look upon everything as loss compared with the overwhelming gain of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I did in actual fact suffer the loss of everything, but I considered it useless rubbish...*

I love the way Paul says it. ALL these things are WORTHLESS compared with the INFINITE value of knowing Christ. For Paul that meant all his credentials were not important at all compared to knowing Jesus. Paul was not saying that the formal study of the Scriptures was unimportant. He was saying that using “credentials” to try to impress others was foolish. He is also saying that all the physical things in life - the stuff which he could have accumulated, he had DISCARDED for the sake of Christ. Having a comfortable life with all his needs and wants being supplied was not something that was first and foremost in his thinking. Here are the challenges for me in these verses. What do I truly value? 1- Do I value the opinion of others more than what Jesus thinks of me? I value formal training and I am extremely grateful for my education. However, the most important thing is not the degrees that I’ve earned but whether all that studying has led me into a deeper walk with Jesus. 2- Do I long for the finer things in life rather than being willing to sacrifice for the Lord? Am I focused on my physical wants and needs so much that I do not seek to grow in my Love and Devotion for the Lord Jesus? In commenting on these verses Henderson said: *“Our losses in life are God’s way of prying our fingers off our comfortable idols in order to free our hands to more fully embrace Christ as our ALL in ALL.”* So what do I consider LOSS for the sake of Jesus my Lord? What am I willing to leave behind because of the call of Christ Jesus in my life? The old song says it well. *“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the Light of His Glory and Grace.”*

