

Introduction:

On June 8, 2021, those who are still keeping up with all the talent America's got, witnessed Jane Kristen Marczewski receive a golden buzzer from none other than Simon Cowell. The rest of us who have heard of her did so because her audition video went viral on YouTube.¹ You may know her by her stage name, Nightbirde. Her audition song was an original entitled "It's Ok." At the time of her audition, she was battling her third round of cancer. Her husband had left her. She had moved from Nashville to California. Her song recounts some events in this transition period. She says she thought the move to California would leave her problems behind. It didn't work that way. She sings, "Oh my, now I can't hide. Said I knew myself, but I guess I lied." Then in the next chorus, "Said I knew what I wanted, but I guess I lied." She feels lost. Her song is about direction, not salvation. With all that happened in her life, she didn't know what she wanted, how to react to her problems, which way to go next. Then comes the chorus, "It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay if you're lost, we're all a little lost and it's alright." If you haven't seen the video, I encourage you to. If it doesn't move you, you're a doubly cold-hearted Grinch whose heart is four sizes too small. I love the song. I listen to it often. I ask, why does it connect? Why would Heidi Klum claim, "It pushes all the heartstring buttons"? Why did Terry Crews say to Nightbirde, "You are the voice we all need to hear this year"? Is it not because her chorus tells us what we are all searching for? "It's okay." Isn't that what we long to hear? "Despite everything else going on, I'm okay." With so much uncertainty in our lives, we long to know something is certain. We want to be confident it's okay, I'm okay. Here's the struggle. I listen to the song over and over again because I need the reminder. But I also listen repeatedly because deep down inside I am aware just because a talented singer says it beautifully and with emotion doesn't mean it's true. Maybe it was okay for her when she died just eight months later, on February 19, 2022. How can I know it's okay for me? How can we have confidence?

This is where **Philippians 3:1-11** comes in. **Philippians** is about Walking Worthy of Christ's Gospel. In this paragraph, Paul takes up the question of confidence. It really is the question, "When am I okay?" Paul demonstrates there are essentially two approaches to convincing ourselves we're okay. The flesh provides false confidence; only Christ provides true confidence. How can we tell where our confidence is? We can uncover a series of questions from **Philippians 3:1-11** to help us evaluate where our confidence is. When we are Confident in Christ, we're okay.

Discussion:

I. In what do I rejoice?

- A. "Rejoice in the Lord," Paul says in **Philippians 3:1**. Again in **Philippians 4:4**, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." Take joy in the Lord. Celebrate the Lord. In **Philippians**, the "Lord" is Jesus (see **Philippians 1:2; 3:20**). Paul is writing from Roman imprisonment, yet this is the most joy-filled book of the New Testament. Why? Because his joy wasn't found in his freedom, in his reputation, in his pleasant feelings. His joy was found in Christ. That's not to say Paul never felt sadness. In fact, in **Philippians 2:27**, when Epaphroditus was sick and near death, Paul had sorrow. However, for all the occurrences in life that might cause sadness and sorrow, none of them took Jesus away, so the joy could remain.
- B. At the same time, this is not saying you can't have feelings of gladness and happiness because of anything else. When you get a promotion, when your surgery is a success, when your team wins the championship, you are certainly allowed to have happiness as a result. However, if what gives you an underlying foundation of joy is anything other than Jesus, you're not okay. If the world is falling in around you, but what allows you to keep moving forward is, "At least I still have my family," or "At least I still have my retirement," or "At least it's not raining," or "At least I still have my health," or "At least I still have my job," you are not okay. The okay answer is "At least I still have Jesus Christ." It's this kind of confidence that can allow us to say things like, "You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore before you decide to be happy" as Jane did during her AGT audition. I pray her confidence was true. Or as my friend Kelsey Harris, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor when she was fourteen, said when asked why she smiled so much during her radiation treatments, "Life is more interesting when you're happy." She died at age 16. Since I knew her, I'm certain her confidence was true. When we rejoice in Jesus, we're okay.

¹ <https://youtu.be/CZlvBfoHDk0>

II. About what do I boast?

- A. In **Philippians 3:3**, Paul says we “glory in Christ Jesus” (ESV). Or as the Lexham English Bible says, we “boast in Christ Jesus.” We know what it means to boast. It’s what we talk about. It’s what we brag about. We live in Champa Bay; we know what it means to boast and brag about something. Even though our shouting at the television had absolutely nothing to do with the Buccaneers winning the Super Bowl, when it was all said and done, “We won the Super Bowl.” Am I right? Imagine you were applying for a job. Your prospective boss asks you, “Why should I consider you above the other candidates?” How do you answer that question? Do you talk about your experience, your passion for the company and its mission, your accomplishments, your abilities? Your answer to the question is your boast in that setting.
- B. Now imagine God asking you in the judgment, “Why should I let you dwell in my eternal heavenly kingdom?” What is your response? Do you talk about the rituals you went through? Do you talk about your family? ...your expertise in Bible knowledge? ...your zeal in speaking out against false teachers? ...your virtue and moral excellence? Or is your response, “Jesus is my friend”? This passage is anchored in **Jeremiah 9:23-26** where the Lord explained we must not boast in wealth, strength, or wisdom, but in knowing Him. Of course, this question isn’t just about the day of judgment. What about today? Do we talk about, brag about, boast about Jesus today? Do we tell others about Him? Do we talk about what He’s done for us? Do we do it anywhere other than here at church? When we boast in Jesus, we’re okay.

III. Whom do I know?

- A. Most of us have stories about our brushes with fame. Did some of you get pictures with Tim Tebow last September? I have pictures of me with John Maxwell and Kenneth Starr. I like to tell the story about the time Marita and I flew from Dallas to Port Arthur, TX with Debbie Harry of Blondie fame. Then there’s the time when Marita rode on a fair ride with Mark Slaughter from the 80s hair band Slaughter at the Tennessee state fair. We like to talk about who we know.
- B. Here’s the deal. When it comes to attaining the resurrection, to being okay, it’s not what you know, it’s who you know. However, my picture with John Maxwell and autographed books aren’t going to help. We aren’t going to enter the eternal heavenly kingdom of God by presenting our credentials, resumé, and curriculum vitae. It’s all about the references. In fact, on the entrance exam for heaven, there will be only one question: Do you know Jesus? In **Philippians 3:8**, Paul counted everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ. It’s not the surpassing worth of being someone important or accomplishing important things, but the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ. Please, see it is not the surpassing worth of knowing yourself as the post-modern milieu would have you believe. “Know thyself” is the maxim of the day. However, it wasn’t advice given by Jesus or any of His apostles. It isn’t found in God-breathed scripture. It was found inscribed on the temple of Apollo in Delphi and was believed by the ancients to have been first said by Apollo’s oracle there. Please, be aware the road back to you is not the way of salvation, there is only one Way to salvation: Jesus. When we know Jesus, we’re okay.

IV. What do I value?

- A. Back up and remember Jesus. In **Philippians 2:3**, Paul tells us to count others more significant than ourselves. Then in **2:5-6**, he compares that to Jesus who didn’t count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself. What did Jesus value? He valued us. He valued our salvation. He gave up His throne in heaven to save us. In **Philippians 3:7-8**, Paul talks about the counting he did. He counted everything as loss in order to gain Christ. He didn’t count being blameless according to the Law, zealous according to Judaism, or being a Hebrew of Hebrews as something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself of all that was himself in order to gain Christ.
- B. The picture is of an accounting ledger. On one side is a list for gains, the other a list for losses. The gain side has only one entry: Christ. Everything else is on the loss side. We often think of this in terms of persecution. That is, of someone threatening to take something away unless we abandon Christ. Certainly, that applies. If an opponent says, “Deny Jesus or I’ll imprison you and your family,” we should choose Jesus. However, I’ve discovered another way this comes into play. Do you have some sin you know you should confess and put to death, but you are afraid if you do, you’ll lose your reputation, lose your family, lose your job, maybe even lose your freedom? Put those things on the loss side of the ledger. Hanging on to them is not worth it. Value Jesus. Do whatever it takes to gain Him. If we value Jesus, we’re okay.

V. Where am I found?

- A. In **Philippians 2:7-8**, Jesus emptied Himself and was found in human form. In **Philippians 3:9**, Paul gave up everything so he might gain Christ and be found in Him. Think about this, the heart of discipleship is following

the master: going where the teacher goes, watching what the teacher does, hearing what the teacher says. A disciple can be found with his master, with her teacher.

- B. No doubt, one aspect of this is the spiritual level. That is, am I spiritually in Christ and in His body? No matter where I am geographically, I am to be in Christ by surrendering to Him. But can we think about this practically as well? Where am I found locationally? That is, am I going places Jesus would go or do I go places where Jesus gets left behind at the door? Do I have to step outside of Jesus to do the thing I'm about to do or would Jesus do that right along with me? The movie I'm about to watch, would Jesus watch that one with me? The song I'm singing along to, would Jesus sing along with me? The website I'm surfing, would Jesus surf it with me? The party I'm attending, would Jesus attend with me? The job I hold, would Jesus work it alongside me? The conversation I'm having, would I have it if Jesus were standing next to me? Where am I found? If we're found in Jesus, we're okay.

VI. Whom am I imitating?

- A. In both of our last two questions, Paul was actually following in the footsteps of Jesus. He wanted to count the way Jesus counted and be found the way Jesus was found. In **Philippians 3:10**, we take it a bit deeper. In **Philippians 2:7-8**, Paul described Jesus, "taking the form of a servant...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (ESV). He immediately follows with, "Therefore God has highly exalted him..." (2:9). "Therefore..." he says. Because Jesus was obedient to the point of death, God exalted Him. Paul wants that exaltation. He wants to imitate Jesus in the resurrection; therefore, he wants to imitate Jesus in His suffering and death. The connections are even stronger because the word translated "becoming like" in **Philippians 3:10** is an intensified verbal form of the word translated "form" in **2:6, 7**.² The NASB and NKJV give us the feel saying, "being conformed to His death." Jesus was in the *form* of God but took the *form* of a servant. Though it doesn't use the word found in **3:10**, the concept is clearly Jesus was conformed to us; we must also *conform* to Him, to His death.
- B. Understand this, however, it is not the literal death part we really have to conform to. Being crucified with Christ does not necessarily mean literally being crucified (**Galatians 2:20**). It is the servant part, the obedience part. It is the part where we deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Jesus (**Luke 9:23**). Of course, if obedience leads to execution, we conform to Jesus and testify to the surpassing worth of knowing Him and being found in Him by being willing to die. After all, what we long for is the resurrection. But subtly, underneath this paragraph is the important point that Paul was imitating Jesus. He counted like Jesus counted. He was found like Jesus was found. He was formed as Jesus was formed. Which led to a death like Jesus's death. Therefore, He will be exalted like Jesus was exalted. The question we have to ask is with whom are we conforming? Whom are we imitating? Do we imitate rock stars, athletes, politicians, the cool kids at school, the worldly, our favorite tv characters? Are we conforming to the postmodern notion that we will break all the molds and just be ourselves? Or are we conforming to Jesus? Do we imitate Jesus? If we are imitating Jesus, we're okay.

Conclusion:

We are all searching for "okay." We all want to know we're okay. There's only one way to know it's really okay. Put your confidence completely, totally, and in all other ways in Christ. Rejoice in Christ. Boast in Christ. Know Christ. Value Christ. Be found in Christ. Imitate Christ. Do you know how all of this starts? Because Paul was writing to Christians who had already started this journey, he didn't have to explain the beginning in **Philippians**. However, we see a great explanation in **Romans 6:1-5**. How do we begin to imitate Jesus's death? How are we found in Christ? When we are baptized for the remission of our sins. Baptism is not the end, but it is the beginning. Will you imitate Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection? Will you be baptized into Jesus Christ beginning your life of rejoicing, boasting, valuing, being found in, and imitating Christ? If we can help you, let us know.

² "Form" in **Philippians 2:6,7** translates μορφή (morphē). "Becoming like" in **Philippians 3:10** translates συμμορφίζω (summorphizo). Notice the stem μορφ (morph) in this intensified verb.