

WARM-UP

- What were your favorite subjects or activities in school? Share them with the group.
- Was there a time that you forgot something important? Tell us about it.
- Share about a time that you went for something you really wanted.

WORD

¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote a list of the “achievements” he had reached, as perceived by the religious community around him. In Philippians 3:5,6, he said he was circumcised, an Israelite, a Benjamite, a Hebrew, a Pharisee, and blameless under their current Law. However, after Paul discovered Christ, he forgot all these so-called achievements for the true prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. There are at least three lessons we can learn from Paul.

1 Forget

*¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: **forgetting** what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **PHILIPPIANS 3:13,14***

To *forget*, in the way that Paul used it, meant to stop caring about the things in his past. He no longer cared that he had reached worldly achievements that his peers could only dream about. Paul teaches us that the things that were important to us and that shaped our identity in our past, whether successes or failures, are seen in a different way in light of Christ saving us by His death on the cross. What defined your identity before you met Christ? What did you learn to forget so you could walk in His will?

2 Press Forward

*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and **straining forward** to what lies ahead, . . . **PHILIPPIANS 3:13***

Paul also teaches us that we must “strain forward” to what is ahead, to what Jesus has for us as we follow His will. Straining means that we are actively, intentionally pushing our way toward that goal. With God’s strength and grace, we must be straining forward, against what the world says is correct, against our own worries, fears, and anxieties. Our true prize is the calling God has for our lives, fulfilled as we follow His leading and obey His will. Recall a time when you pressed forward in spite of opposition. By God’s grace, how did you overcome the challenges you faced?

3 Be Fruitful

²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. . . . **PHILIPPIANS 1:21,22**

Paul was certain that to live on earth goes hand in hand with being fruitful for Christ. In addition to forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to our calling in God, we should be fruitful for Christ by encouraging one another to follow Him, and by showing others the way to Him as well. Share about a time when you were encouraged by a friend to keep on moving toward God's will for you.

APPLICATION

- Are there things in your past that you need to let go of in order to focus on Christ's will for you? What is one thing you can do about it this week?
- How can you know God's will for your life better? What is one thing you can do this week to strain forward intentionally toward the upward prize of God's will for you?
- Do you have friends or family who need to know what Christ has done for them, that they may walk in His will? How can you talk to them about it this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the calling that He has placed on your life and the identity you have in Him.
- Ask God for His grace in putting past achievements and failures behind you so that you may strain toward His will for you. Ask Him for His grace to keep your priorities straight and focused on Him.
- Pray that others will discover and follow God's will in their lives as you live a life focused on obedience to God.

NOTES



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