

LESSON 11

Philippians 3:12-16



Eyes on the Prize

OPEN IT

1. What is something you hope to achieve someday? Maybe it's a certain job you want, a prize you hope to win, some sort of recognition, anything. What things do you have to do in order to achieve that accomplishment?

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Philippians 3:12-16

2. What does Paul say he has not obtained yet?
3. Why does Paul press on to make it his own?
4. What is Paul's goal in life?
5. What does Paul encourage us to hold true to? What does he mean by that?

Day 2

TODAY'S THEME: IDENTIFYING THE PRIZE

Read Philippians 3:12-16

Paul definitely seems to be quite the fan of sports. He refers to them many times throughout his letters. He talks about races, boxing, and more. And in this passage, Paul again likens our Christian life to some sort of a race. He talks about a prize that he hasn't achieved yet and a goal to press on towards that prize because he wants to take hold of it! It's just like athletes today. You won't be much of a competitor if you don't care about winning the game or winning the championship. We work hard and practice towards that goal of being the best we can be so that we can win the prize.

What is that prize when it comes to our faith? Some people would just say it's to get saved. Once you're saved then it doesn't really matter how you live your life because you essentially have your "get out of hell free ticket." But Jesus and the rest of the Scriptures seem to indicate that that standard is too low. For some people, the prize or goal is a sort of checklist of things. So that we can say, "Look at all the things I do: I read my Bible multiple days a week; I pray—sure not as much as I should, but at least I do some; I go to church, etc.... The list could go on. But Paul seems to have addressed personal spiritual achievements to look good in front of others earlier in chapter 3, and he says he considered them "rubbish." So what is the goal? The prize, according to verse 14, is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Simply put, the goal is Christ—to know Christ and be like Christ.

6. What does it mean to say that Christ is the prize of our faith? How would you explain that?

7. How can you know what your prize really is in your faith?

Day 3

TODAY'S THEME: NEVER LET GOOD BE ENOUGH!

Read Philippians 3:12-16

There is a quote that often motivated me when I was still playing sports and it goes, "Amateurs practice until they get it right, pros practice until they can't get it wrong." So to give a picture, that would be like saying, "I can make a left-handed layup once, so I'm good." Then you move on to working on something else. But a pro would practice that layup until he could do it perfectly with repetition.

For many of us today, we have low standards when it comes to our spiritual maturity. We limit our spiritual maturity to things like how often we go to church or how often we do devotions or pray. We'll throw our lives on a sort of moral scale, and as long as it seems like there's more good than bad then eh, who cares! The reality is that all those things are simply a means to an end. We do devotions, pray, gather as Christians for worship because they lead us to know Christ and become more like Christ, which is what real spiritual maturity is measured by. Now, will we achieve absolute perfection in this life? No. Even the apostle Paul says that he has not laid hold of it yet, but that doesn't give us an excuse not to work towards it. Just like it doesn't make sense for a basketball player to say, "I'll never actually make every single shot I ever take, so why work on my jumper?"

"Obviously, pursuing the prize of spiritual perfection begins with dissatisfaction with one's present spiritual condition. Those who think they have reached spiritual perfection will not see the need to pursue a better condition; why should they chase something they believe they already have? Such complacent, contented people are in grave danger of becoming insensitive to their sin and blind to their weaknesses. It is only those who are aware of their desperate spiritual need who come to Christ for salvation (Matthew 5:6). And it is only those who continue to recognize the need to eliminate sin and cultivate holiness who will make progress in the Christian life. This pursuit by the power of the sanctifying Spirit produces a decreasing frequency of sin and increasing love for holiness, which makes less sin feel like more. The truly mature and godly have the most sensitive awareness of their sins and are the humblest before God because of it."¹

8. What things allow for Christians to grow in their faith? How can being actively involved in a church help to grow believers in their walk with God?

9. How can becoming content with your spiritual growth become dangerous for you as a Christian?

¹ MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*. 2001. P. 245

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Read Philippians 3:12-16

True believers will not pursue the prize of spiritual perfection until they recognize the need to improve their condition, but awareness of the need is not enough; there must also be a diligent pursuit. "I press on" means "to run" or "follow after." It speaks of an aggressive, energetic endeavor. Paul pursued the spiritual prize with all his might, straining every spiritual muscle as he ran to win.

The "let go and let God" mentality was foreign to Paul. He was totally dependent on God's power working in his life, yet he also described the Christian life as "labor and striving" (Colossians 1:29) and "the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). He taught that "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" and repeatedly stressed the inevitability of suffering in the Christian life.

Paul was running spiritually to catch the very thing for which Christ Jesus had come after him. In other words, Paul's goal in life was consistent with Christ's goal in saving him. What was Christ's goal in saving Paul? The apostle stated it in Romans 8:29: *"For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren."* God chose Paul, as He did all believers, to make him like Jesus Christ. That purpose for which God saved us is also the purpose for which we live. The Christian life is a life-long pursuit of Christlikeness. That was the Lord's goal in saving Paul and was his goal in response."²

10. What are you currently doing to become more like Christ? How have you seen God change you to be more like Jesus since you became a Christian?

11. What areas of your life look like Jesus? What areas of your life need to change to better reflect the character of Christ?

² MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*. 2001. Pp. 245-246.

Note: This study guide was written by Pastors Tim Badal, Mario Arindaeng, and Jeremy Anderson, Village Bible Church. www.villagebible.church