



PHILIPPIANS OVERVIEW

Stuck in house arrest, Paul writes to encourage the Philippian church to live as citizens worthy of the Gospel in the midst of their suffering. Paul's letter to the Philippians is so apt for us today. We need his words that can enable us, in light of and because of Christ Jesus, to rejoice in the midst of suffering, trial and loss. Now is the time to be a united church on mission together, willing to lose it all for Christ's fame and our gain.

PART 9: RUNNING TOWARD MATURITY

Read the text: Philippians 3:12—4:1

Not 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. 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, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it

we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

In today's passage, Paul calls the church to make becoming like Jesus their greatest aim, because Jesus shows what it means to be truly human. Using the picture of a race, Paul calls them to make it their aim to gain Christ, the greatest prize. It starts with admitting you haven't arrived and still have a long way to go. Then, you set your focus on Jesus, not relying on past accomplishments or discouraged by past failures. Instead, you become consumed with the work of Christ on your behalf. You know you are only in this race because Christ has made you His own. Next, you pursue Christ by following and imitating others who follow Christ, rather than those who are enemies of the cross. And last, you then live as a citizen of the kingdom of Christ, knowing that your home is not this world, but the new heaven and new earth where Jesus reigns over all.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.

1. What are ways you may have come to believe you've "arrived" in some way? Are there areas of life where you have stopped experiencing growth? Have you become content with where you are and stopped seeing your need to become more like Jesus in this area? Why do you think that is?
2. To set our eyes on Jesus means we are not distracted either by past successes or past failures. Are there ways you have

been relying on past seasons of growth rather than looking to Jesus every day? Are there past failures that still hang over you and that you are having a hard time moving past? What does Jesus say to you about both of these? What does it look like to live in complete neediness before Jesus every day?

3. Who is someone (or multiple people) who you want to imitate and follow because of how they follow Jesus? What next step do you need to take to follow them?
4. Pastor Jeff shared, "You will always live your life in the place you think you belong." Where do you think you belong? Why do you think that? What about your life matches that and what doesn't? Take time to confess where your life doesn't look like the life of a kingdom citizen. Ask the Spirit to help you grow in this area and ask your group for their input on a tangible step you can take to grow in this area.