

"Securing the Future of San Tan Bible Church" Five Year Anniversary Message Phil 3:12-16

INTRODUCTION

After my first in seminary, I had the privilege of visiting the British Museum in London on my way to a three week intense field class in Israel. There is an interesting map on display in the museum. It's an old mariner's chart, drawn in 1525, outlining the North American coastline and adjacent waters. The cartographer made some interesting notations on areas of the map that represented regions not yet explored. He wrote: "Here be giants," "Here be fiery scorpions," and "Here be dragons." Eventually, the map came into the possession of a British explorer in the early 1800's, Sir John Franklin. Franklin scratched out the fearful inscriptions and replaced them with these words across the map: "Here is God."

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."
Corrie Ten Boom

"Times are tough now in Albania. Crime is rising, both petty and violent. May the Church arise." – Robb Provost tweet

Today is San Tan Bible Church 5 Year Anniversary Celebration.

READ Phil 3:12-16

The Bible is full of athletic imagery – as evident in this passage.

Proposition: 5 Guidelines to Secure our Future at San Tan Bible Church:

- 1) **Aim** at the **Right Target**
- 2) **Run** with **Complete Focus**
- 3) **Strive** for the **Ultimate Prize**
- 4) **Eliminate** Things that **Hinder**

5) **Play** According to the **Rules**

So That: Individual Pursuit of Holiness. Corporate Pursuit of ...

1st Guideline to secure our future at San Tan Bible Church, we must ...

I. Aim at the Right Target 3:12

One man said, “To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and then call whatever you hit the ‘Target.’”

- We don’t want to do that
- We want to make sure we know the target first and then aim at it

Point – what is the goal

- we would like a church building, we would love it if God keeps adding numbers, we would love a training institute here (first for the whole congregation, then for leaders), a Prison ministry, an outreach to the Indian Reservation, to the homeless, and the list goes on. But these are not “the goal.”
- The target/goal is **maturity**.

J.C.Ryle describes mature Christians in his book “Holiness”
– *“their sense of sin is deeper...their faith stronger...their hope brighter... their love more extensive”*

Proof – **Phil 3:12** – “**Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.**”

“**Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect,**” – acknowledgement we still fall short!

“**but I press on**” – from the Greek word **διώκω** – same word that is translated as “persecutor” in **v. 6** of chapter 5– the same zealotry → I run, I pursue, I chase. It’s used to describe a sprinter. Paul says I’m running after this with all my strength!

“**in order that**” – purpose statement

“**I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus**” – maturity, sanctification

- a redeemed humanity, transformed from glory to glory
- God the Father adopted us into His family to be loving Him

Illustration: Charles Spurgeon founded a Pastor’s College in London to train preachers. It’s motto was:

Teneo et Teneor,
which means
“I hold and I am held.”

Christ is holding on to us, the Holy Spirit is holding on to our salvation (Romans 8) and we have our human responsibility to hold on tightly to that truth.

Illustration: *“In the 2004 Olympics, during the 50 meter 3 positions rifle competition, with one bullet left to shoot, all Matt Emmons needed was a score of 7.2 to win his second gold medal of the Olympic Games. On his first nine shots in the finals, Emmons’ lowest score was a 9.3. He took careful aim, fired ... bull’s eye.*

Only Emmons’ shot pierced the wrong target – he had shot at the target next to his — resulting in a score of 0.

As a church, as an individual, we need to always be reexamining and making sure we are aiming at the right target.

Application: At a recent Newcomer’s event, the question was asked about our plans for a building. At some point, we will have a building. That is definitely in our plans. We would love to have a building! But we will always keep the main things main thing.

We will always focus on:

- spiritual growth, not numerical growth;
- expositional preaching

- qualified leadership
- God-centered corporate worship
- ministry of entire body

The goal will always be individual maturity in Christ and corporate maturity for Christ.

Aim at the **Right Target**, ...

2nd Guideline to secure our future at San Tan Bible Church, we must ...

II. Run with Complete Focus 3:13

Point – with our whole heart; concentrated focus

Proof – **Phil 3:13** – **“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead,”**

“Brethren” – a term of affection from Paul, a gentle term of intimacy to move the hearts of the Philippians toward him

- an expression of warmth

“I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet” – another acknowledgement of “Ain’t there yet”

“but one thing I do” – complete focus

- total concentration
- strip away everything else!
- tune out the surroundings!
- tune out the distractions!

The third of Jonathan Edwards’ “70 Resolutions” said this:
“To live with all my might while I do live.”

Jim Elliot, the great missionary in the 50’s said this:
“Wherever God has you, be all there.”

“forgetting what *lies* behind” – the idea of “put off”

Illustration: Like the Italian race car driving instructor, who got in the car with his student, reached up to the rear view mirror, broke it off, and tossed it out. He turned to his student as declared *“The first lesson in Italian driving – what’s behind you doesn’t matter.”*

Illustration: Num 11:4-6 → James Montgomery Boice – *“There are many leeks and garlic Christians among us.”*

“and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead” – the idea of “put on”

- to stretch a muscle to its limit
- in the original Greek language, there are double prepositions added to it to intensify the image!!
- This is a runner stretching every muscle to reach the finish line in front of him.
- focused concentration, just looking ahead at the goal

Whitefield – *“I am never better than when I am on full stretch for God.”*

“to what *lies* ahead” – v.14 – Paul is reminding us what lies ahead

David Livingstone told the London Missionary Society in his early years as a missionary in Africa: *“I’m willing to go in any direction, provided it is forward.”*

Application: God has done great things in 5 years of San Tan Bible Church and (not but)

- we learn from our past
- we thank God for our past
- we plan and prepare for the future
- we keep our eyes fixed on the goal, on Christ

2 Cor 4:18 – **“we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal”**

Aim at the Right Target, Run with Complete Focus, ...

3rd Guideline to Secure our Future at San Tan Bible Church, we must ...

III. Strive for the Ultimate Prize 3:14

Point – with whole heart, our whole being

- to strive, we must exert, strain, agonize
- recall athletic imagery – blood vessels popping in the neck, muscles straining

I love how baggy my pants feel after running a marathon or a long climb up a difficult mountain. That is the result of physical exertion and strain. You know what is much better than that? The spiritual emancipation (freedom) of a clean conscience striving after God

Proof – **Phil 3:14** – “**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Enoch, Elijah - the trumpet sounds –

Matt 24:31 – “**He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.**”

1 Cor 15:52 – “**in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**”

1 Thess 4:16 – “**the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.**”

The prize of the upward call

- that may come when we are raptured up to Him or when our life here on earth is extinguished
- in either case, we have the trumpet sound and we are immediately ushered into the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

Richard Baxter –

“It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside. He who is all seems to them as nothing, and that which is nothing seems to them as good as all. It is lamentable indeed, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, that they should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize they should run for.”

Illustration: A runner doesn’t just run with his legs. He runs with his arms. And not just legs and arms, he runs with his core. He runs with his head ... whole body ... whole being.

In the same way, we need to strive towards that prize of the upward call of God with all that we have.

Amy Carmichael is a missionary who opened an orphanage and founded a mission in India. She served in India for 55 years without furlough – *“Give me the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope no disappointments tire, the passion that will burn like fire. Let me not sink to be a clod; make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.”*

Application: Sometimes it is a sprint. Sometimes it is more like an endurance race. Either way, it should be our passion to strive towards the goal.

Aim at the Right Target, Run with Complete Focus, Strive for the Ultimate Prize ...

4th Guideline to secure our future at San Tan Bible Church, we must ...

IV. Eliminate Things that Hinder

3:15

Point – lay them aside – we need to be unencumbered/purged race

Illustration: In my early computer programming days with UNIX, I learned to use the “purge” command so that files would not build up. In the same way, we need to purge things that are a distraction to our ministry.

lay aside the those things that are neutral or even moderately good and focus on the things that are more intensely good for the glory of God.

F.B. Myer – *“Self-dissatisfaction lies at the root of our noblest achievements.”*

- We should have a healthy sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Proof – **Phil 3:15** – **“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;”**

“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude;”

- perfect may be better translated as “mature” as in mature Christians

“and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you;”

- sanctification

We haven’t arrived.

This is fighting the good fight

1 Tim 6:12 – **“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”**

2 Tim 4:7 – **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith”**

This is laying aside every sin and every encumbrance,
Heb 12:1 – “since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”

“Sin” –

“Encumbrance” – not sinful, in and of themselves, → distracting!

Neil Postman, in his seminal book “Amusing Ourselves to Death”, said, “*Americans are the best entertained and quite likely the least well-informed people in the Western world.*”

Illustration: There was a huge eagle’s nest high in the branches of a tree or in the crag of a cliff. When a mother eagle builds her nest she starts with thorns, broken branches, sharp rocks, and a number of other items that seem entirely unsuitable for the project. But then she lines the nest with a thick padding of wool, feathers, and fur from animals she has killed, making it soft and comfortable for the eggs. By the time the growing birds reach flying age, the comfort of the nest and the luxury of free meals make them reluctant to leave. That’s when the mother eagle begins “stirring up the nest.” With her strong talons she begins pulling up the thick carpet of fur and feathers, bringing the sharp rocks and branches to the surface. As more of the bedding gets plucked up, the nest becomes more uncomfortable for the young eagles. Eventually, this and other urgings prompt the growing eagles to leave their once-comfortable abode and move on to grow.

Application: What if treated our Bibles the way we treat our smart phones? What if we...

...carried it with us everywhere?

...turned back to get it if we forgot it?

...checked it for messages throughout the day?

...used it in case of an emergency?

...spent an hour or more using it each day?

We must eliminate things that hinder us individually and as a church – laying aside every encumbrance.

Aim at the **Right Target, Run** with **Complete Focus, Strive** for the **Ultimate Prize, Eliminate** Things that **Hinder, ...**

5th Guideline to secure our future at San Tan Bible Church, we must ...

V. Play According to the Rules 3:16

Point – according to the rules; instruction manual, blueprint, guide book

- we have the Word of God; the Bible

Proof – **Phil 3:16** – “**however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.**”

“**keep living by that same standard**” – literally means following in line - the path, the Way, following the Teacher, the Master

There is **One Authority** over Man, The Word of God.

- the authority of the Word of God

This is one thing we establish, we will never deviate from, won't bend, compromise or negotiate - EVER:

- the binding, complete authority of the Word of God over everything we do
- this is our main philosophy of ministry
- I discussed this with the provisional elders at the beginning of San Tan Bible Church – the authority of scripture and what that looks like

Illustration: A factory manager found that production was being hampered by the tardiness of his people returning from the lunch hour. When the whistle blew to return to work, few were at their machines. He posted a sign by the suggestion box offering a cash award for the best answer to this question: “What should we do to ensure that every man will be inside the factory when the whistle blows?” Many suggestions were submitted, and the one that was

selected did solve the problem. But the manager, a man with a sense of humor, liked this one best, though he could not use it: *“Let the last man in blow the whistle.”*

We can't do this. We can't redefine the boundaries or the standards as we go.

Application: Our 5 year celebration means we are developing a history. We are building traditions.

Tradition can be good:

2 Thess 2:8 – “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.”

Tradition can be bad:

Col 3:8 – “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men,”

1) We always have one Ultimate Authority – The Word of God

2) We remember it is:

- absolute
- necessary
- sufficient
- authoritative

CONCLUSION

Imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. Yes, every morning. However, it debits what is left over at the end of the day. Every evening, it deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every penny, of course! Each of us has such a bank in our lives. Its name is TIME.

Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to

good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the day's deposits; the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the "tomorrow." You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success! The clock is running, it is your future. Make the most of today.

4/28/13