

A PHILIPPIANS STUDY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

November 26, 2023

PHILIPPIANS week 11 - Aaron McRae

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is your favorite holiday tradition?

➤ EXPLORATION

In a recent poll, the following verses were named as the most popular in Philippians:

Most Popular Verses in Philippians

1:21 *"...to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

3:14 *"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."*

4:6 *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."*

4:7 *"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

4:13 *"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

These truths bring great encouragement and deep conviction. They are invitations and they are also

warnings to be heeded if we want to experience the kind of life Paul describes in Philippians. As we continue on in chapter 3 Paul shares how he faces difficulties.

Philippians 3:12-13 (From your bible, read aloud)

When faced with challenges it is sometimes tempting to simply try harder or to take matters into your own hands. Paul, however, leads us in a different direction. He says that we are to "press on," keeping our focus on Christ, not on our past successes or our present troubles.

In another of Paul's letters, he uses the illustration of a runner in a race to help his readers understand this concept.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (From your bible, read aloud)

What stands out to you from these verses?

Paul has a goal, to follow Christ no matter what. This is not a passive endeavor, it requires deep commitment and intentionality.

Pressing Toward the Goal

- Forgetting and Focusing

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

Just like a runner must focus on the finish line, Paul instructs us to do the same. He does not focus on his past, good or bad. He doesn't spend his time thinking about his achievements and success or his sins and failures. His energy and his focus are on moving toward the goal of knowing Jesus.

What do you tend to focus on the most during your day?

Pressing Toward the Goal

- Forgetting and Focusing
- Setting our Minds

Philippians 3:15-16 (From your bible, read aloud)

Spiritual maturity only comes as we are shaped by God. When Paul says, take such a view of things, he is talking about having the same mindset as Christ. This theme is repeated several times in Philippians:

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus..." 2:5

"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things." 3:19

"I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." 4:2

Paul is writing to his friends and encouraging them to stay focused on Christ and to remain united in the work that God has called them to do. The emphasis here is on Christ.

We may be tempted to think that maturity automatically comes with age and experience, but Paul is clear that the only way to spiritual maturity is to have a life that is focused on Christ.

The Mindset of the Mature: (from Philippians)

- Centered on the gospel (1:7)
- Seeking unity (2:2)
- Humble like Jesus (2:5)
- An eternal perspective (3:19)
- Caring for each other (4:10)

Who is a spiritually mature person you know? What qualities in them do you desire to develop in your own life?

Philippians 3:17 (From your bible, read aloud)

Pressing Toward the Goal

- Forgetting and Focusing
- Setting our Minds
- Following this Example

The idea of imitating a teacher was common in early church culture. Becoming an apprentice to a respected teacher was something they would have understood. Paul invited them to imitate him as he followed Christ. He also warned them against those who rejected Christ.

Philippians 3:18-19 (From your bible, read aloud)

There is a big difference between having a thought and having a mindset. Paul is describing people who only think of themselves and abandon the message of the cross.

Philippians 3:20-21 (From your bible, read aloud)

We have so much to look forward to in the future, but we also have a lot that we must attend to now. Paul is urging us to remember that our citizenship is in heaven, even now when we are still here on earth. This mindset will help us have the proper perspective of our current situation.

Pressing Toward the Goal

- Forgetting and Focusing - toward the goal of gaining Jesus
- Setting our Minds - to be like Christ
- Following this Example - the Lord Jesus Christ

Our goal is an intimate relationship with Jesus both now and forever!

> TAKE AWAY

"But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

Take time to pray for one another that your life may continually be focused on the true goal, which is to know Christ Jesus.