

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

"PRESS ON- THE JOY OF PURSUING CHRIST" | PHILIPPIANS 3:12-21 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- Where do you feel the most at home?

"Christ Has Already Taken Hold of You so Leave the Past in the Past" Philippians 3: 12-13

Paul presses on to live his life the way Jesus wants him to. This is a response to His love. To move forward it takes leaving the past failures and success behind.

- What does it mean when Pastor Brian says, "The Christian life is not living for acceptance; it is living from acceptance"?
- What tends to control people more: past failures or past successes?

"Press toward the Prize and Mature Believers Keep Growing" Philippians 3: 14-17

Paul pursues Jesus because that is his prize. Spiritually mature people know they never arrive at knowing everything about Jesus.

- Besides studying and gaining information, what are other ways of growing in knowledge of Jesus?

"Remember Where You Belong" Philippians 3:18-21

Paul shows there are people whose minds are set on earth and others who have their home in heaven with Jesus.

- What does it mean when someone's "god is their belly"?
- Are you living in a way that shows you are awaiting Jesus?

"Christ Connection: Jesus Is the Prize"

Jesus took hold of us and becomes the goal we pursue, waiting for Him to come as King and transform us.

- If Jesus came back today, would you be excited, or feel like you missed out on things you wanted to do?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Paul pursues Jesus like a runner races for a prize because Jesus saved him. He knows there's so much more to Jesus for him. Christ-followers live humbly wanting to grow in Jesus and know their true home is in heaven with Him.

- Is Jesus the prize you are seeking in life?
- If Jesus is the prize, what has been pulling your eyes off the prize lately?
- Ask God to give you the humility to admit you still have so much more about Jesus to learn.

Press On - The Joy of Pursuing Christ

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 10am.
- B. Slide1-4 Lar: L.E.Storm. REAL. Blood Bank. Missions Prayer.
- C. Slide5 Baby Dedication (10am): Micah & Judah Denny. Noah/Kassie. Ezra, Molly
- D. Slide6 Today is the International Day For the Unreached. | ||
1. **8.3 Billion** people in the world. **7,000 Unreached People Groups**. **3 Billion** have never heard the gospel. [they have no church, no bible in their language, and no one to tell them about *Jesus*]
 2. How many is 3 billion? - *We can read it and think... "That's a lot"*.
 - a) It's a number so far outside our normal human experience that our brain can't intuitively feel it - so let's anchor it to things we can picture:
 - (1) 3 billion heartbeats - is a human lifespan of 95 years.
 - (2) 3 billion sheets paper stacked - is 236 miles tall or 40 Mnt Everests.
 - (3) 3 billion buses lined up - wrap around earth over 900 times.
 - b) **Fact:** all the finances dedicated to **Missions** throughout the American church, **less than 1% goes to the UPG's**. That means 99% of the American churches finances set aside for **Missions** goes to **the reached**.
 - c) This isn't to *overwhelm* you *but* to **invite** you. Because a 3rd of the world is denied access to the gospel, & **we choose not** to forget them!
 3. What should I do? Scan the QR code (7 days of prayer: Muslim people, Hindu people, Buddhist people, Animist people, Non-religious, Chinese, Christian people).
 - a) Snap a picture of your 3 lines on your hand and post it. *Explain it in simple terms. Give 1 or 2 facts you learned today about it. Eg. Did you know?*
 - b) **Also** Larry and I will be give you an opportunity soon to participate in helping both of our 2 UPG's.
- E. Slide7a Bajou Fire in PI: CM you responded and gave **7b \$19,000**.

- F. **Slide8 Memorial Day:** Memorial Day, is a day to honor members of the military who were killed in service, both during deployments overseas or in training and service in the U.S. It is a solemn day to **reflect on** veterans and military personnel who are deceased. **Since** it's not a celebration, **but** a somber day, we don't say, "*Happy Memorial Day*" **but instead**, "*Have a meaningful Memorial Day.*"
- G. **Prayer:** Lord, we **memorialize**/we *preserve the memory* of - all the men/women who have given **the ultimate**/their lives for our protection, safety, & well-being. **We pray for the 1/3rd** of our world that still needs *the gospel*. Use us at CM with our time, talent, and treasure; **and** help us reach both our **Roh** and our **H-People**. **We also pray for our Bajou friends** in PI. - Help them in rebuilding their **homes**, their **church**, and their **lives**.

II. **Slide9 Intro:** *Press On - The Joy of Pursuing Christ*

- A. **If you're frustrated, living here** (in this world) **being here**, ... maybe it's because you're not **from** here. *Our citizenship is in heaven*. This place is just **a stop over**, a **layover**. My favorite airports are Hamad Int in Qatar/Doha/park inside 1 area. Or Singapore's Chiang airport/butterfly. Very nice amenities. **But** I've never thought about moving there to **stay in the airport**. **It's only a layover not my destination!**
1. Now you're thinking of **The Terminal**, *Tom Hanks*. True story of an *Iranian refugee* that lived in Term.1 of Paris's *Charles de Gaulle* Airport for 18 yrs)
- B. **Let me set up up text:** I think the key to our passage this morning is that **Paul is not** talking about striving to **earn** Christ, **but** *pursuing the Christ* he already knows & loves
1. Paul's tone is **not** frustration **but** *holy longing*. **Not** guilt, **but** joy.
Not "try harder," but "there is more of Jesus to know."
- C. Big Idea: **Joy** is found in **pursuing** Christ, **not** pretending you've **arrived**.
- D. Theme: Spiritual growth requires **a forward focus** because Christ is worth pursuing.
- E. Most people think maturity means **arriving**. Paul thinks maturity means **pursuing**.
1. One of the greatest Christians who ever lived says: **Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect.** (12)
 2. If **Paul** hasn't arrived, **then** neither have **we**.

- a) The Christian life **is not standing still**. It is not **living in yesterday's** victories. It is not **pretending** we've reached spiritual perfection.
- b) **It is joyfully pursuing Jesus every day** until we see Him face to face.

F. **Slide10 Read** whole text. Phil. 3:12-21

III. Slide11a **I. CHRIST HAS ALREADY TAKEN HOLD OF YOU (12)**

- A. **12** 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.
 - 1. What is the "this & it"? **11b read** vs10,11 [the Phil bel's saw Paul as *a sp giant!*]
 - 2. **Paul saved 30 yrs earlier**. Nope goals aren't met. actively pressing towards them. haven't reached my final stage of *sanctification* yet.
- B. **This is where the gospel begins**. Paul is not chasing **acceptance**. He already has it.
 - 1. He is not pursuing Christ **so** Christ will love him.
 - 2. He pursues Christ **because** Christ first loved him. [*Jesus made me His own?* καταλαμβάνω/katalaBANō to be won, or *acquired* thru someone's effort]
 - 3. He is **not** trying to earn salvation. He is **responding to** salvation.
- C. **Before** Paul ever pursued Christ, Christ pursued Paul on the Damascus Road. **Before** we reached for Him, He reached for us. **Before** we loved Him, **He** loved us.
 - 1. The Christian life is not living **for** acceptance; it is living **from** acceptance.
- D. What would change if you believed Christ had already **fully taken hold of you**?

IV. Slide12a **2. LEAVE THE PAST IN THE PAST (13)**

- A. **13** But one thing I do: **Forgetting** what lies behind **and** **straining forward** to what lies ahead.
- B. **Forgetting** - *to dismiss from the mind; to stop remembering*.
 - 1. Think of a runner **not looking back** once passing another runner; **instead** focusing on **the tape** set before him.

2. **So forget**/put out of your mind/**stop remembering *anything*** in your **background** which hinders your pursuit of God.

a) Don't take this to mean that **memory** has no place in our spiritual artillery. **It does**. Some battles are won by remembered mercies (Ps.77:11 *I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old*).

(1) The point is **not never look back**. The point is **only look back** for the sake of **pressing forward**.

C. **Paul had plenty behind him: Failures:** persecuting Christians. imprisoning believers. approving Stephen's death. **Successes:** education. influence. religious achievements. [*yet* he refuses to live in either]

1. **Some people** are imprisoned by their **failures**. **Others** are imprisoned by their **successes**. Paul leaves both behind. [*where do you tend to get stuck?*]

a) So forget your **failures** **but also** forget your **achievements** (Paul could have said, I spent 3 yrs w/ Jesus in Arabia. wrote 13 letters. planted between 1-2 dozen churches. went up checked out heaven. *Now* I'm gonna go rent an Airbnb on the Med for awhile, See ya!)

2. You cannot move **forward** while **staring backward**.

D. **Reaching Forward** - *leaning, stretching, straining*. [*like* a runner *leaning forward*]

1. **Slide12b Straining, leaning forward, w/every nerve and muscle**. Like in the **Paris 2024 Olympics**, 100m race. **The closest finals 100m race in history**. They checked a camera that shoots 2000 fps, to see Noah Lyles/torso, who came from behind, hitting 27.1 mph (in the red, white, blue).

2. **Does this intensity describe your race? Are you making deliberate progress in your life?** [*stretch, strain, strive for the prize*]

E. **The cross settles our past**: Christ **paid for** our sins. Christ **removes** our shame. Christ **frees us** from needing to live off old accomplishments.

F. **Are you more controlled by past failures or past successes?** What keeps pulling your eyes backward?

V. Slide13a 3. PRESS TOWARD THE PRIZE (14)

- A. **14** I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- B. Again Paul borrows the imagery of a runner.
- Slide13b The runner: *is focused. is intentional. has a destination. Sha'Carri Richardson* one of the fastest woman in the world 2024.
 - The Christian life is **not** drifting, it's pursuing. [It's **not** perfection. It's **not** direction. It's **not** standing still. *It is moving toward Jesus*]
- C. Slide13c So what is the prize? Ultimately: **Not** heaven itself. **Not** rewards. **Not** success. *The prize is Christ Himself.*
- To **know** Him fully. To **see** Him face to face. To **become** like **Him**.
- D. Please hear this the goal of Christianity is **not** merely *getting to heaven*. The goal is getting more of **Christ**.

VI. Slide14 4. MATURE BELIEVERS KEEP GROWING (15-17)

- A. **15** Let those of us who are **mature** think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16** Only let us hold true to what we have attained. **17** Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
- B. The **mature** are not those who think they have arrived. The **mature** are those who know they haven't. (adopt this mindset)
- Spiritual maturity produces *humility*.
- C. The **closer** we get to **Jesus**, the more we realize *how much more* there is to know.
- Pride** says, 'I've arrived.' **Grace** says, 'Lord, keep changing me.'
- D. Are you growing **comfortable** or growing **deeper**?

VII. Slide15a 5. REMEMBER WHERE YOU BELONG (18-21)

- A. **18** For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. **19** Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. **20** But our

citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** 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.

B. Paul contrasts **2 groups**: Those whose minds are set **on earth**. [their focus: appetite. comfort. temporary things]. Those whose citizenship is **in heaven**. [their focus: Christ. Eternity. His kingdom].

C. Paul reminds them: **Our citizenship is in heaven**.

1. Philippi was proud of its Roman colony/citizenship.
2. Paul says: **15b** Your highest citizenship is elsewhere. You belong to **another King**. You belong to **another Kingdom**. You are awaiting **another Savior**.

D. Jesus is not merely our **example**, Jesus is our **King**.

1. **And one day**: He will **return**. He will **transform** our lowly bodies. He will **complete** what He started. He will **make us fully like Himself**.

VIII. Slide 16 **6. CHRIST-CENTERED CONCLUSION**

A. Notice how Christ fulfills this passage this morning:

1. **Christ took hold of us** (12). **Christ is the goal we pursue** (14). **Christ is our Savior** (20). **Christ is our coming King** (21). **Christ will transform us into His likeness** (21).
 - a) The prize at the end of the race is **not a crown** - it is **Christ Himself**.
 - b) **One day faith** will become **sight**, **pursuit** will become **possession**, **and** we will **finally see the One** we've been *running toward* **all our lives**.

B. **Prayer**: Lord as we your church also celebrate **Pentecost**, the birthday of the christian church today. We are reminded of your first followers being filled with Your HS, **and** we pray as your 2026 followers, *come, fill us fresh today!* As we sing *Goodbye to yesterday. And we celebrate The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. We've got resurrection in our veins. Praise the Lord, that we've been born again.*

C. Keywords: Press on, forgetting, straining, citizenship.