

March 8/9, 2003

Study Questions
Experiencing Joy: A Study in Philippians
Press On Toward the Goal
Philippians 3:12-16
Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. If others were to say “this one thing” defines your life, what would that be? Why?
2. What is the goal of your life? In what ways do your daily decisions related to time and priorities reflect this goal? Is it obvious to others around you that this is your life goal?
3. Often our reason for not doing certain things we think we should be doing is that we are simply “too busy.” The reality is, we all have time for what we think is important. Our schedules don’t reflect being too busy as much as they reflect what our real values are. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
4. One day when we give an account for our lives, do you think God will find the statement “I was too busy” acceptable for why we didn’t pursue His purpose in this world more?

Bible Study

1. Read Philippians 3:1-11. What did God teach you from that text?
2. In 3:12 Paul uses two phrases: “Not that I have already obtained”—which is active, meaning he’s done it; and “have already become perfect”—which is passive, meaning God has done it to him. How do these two phrases capture the balance between 1:6 and 2:12?

How does 3:12b help explain this balance between our part and God’s part? See also Ephesians 2:10 and John 15:16.

3. What does Paul mean by “I forget what lies behind” (v13)?

In what way do we “forget” since Paul has just reminded us of his past in 3:1-11?

4. How does 3:14 help interpret the phrase “reaching forward to what lies ahead” from 3:13?

What is the goal according to 3:8?

Then what is the prize?

5. Given what the goal and prize are, what does Paul mean by “this one thing I do” in 3:13?

What defines Paul’s life?

How does this become a filter through which all other decisions should be made?

6. The word for “perfect” in 3:15 differs from 3:12. In verse 12 it is a noun referring to having received the reward or having finished the race. In 3:15 the word is an adjective meaning being ready to compete or mature. In 3:15 Paul states that those who are mature should be characterized by living for “this one thing.” In 3:15b,16 we are reminded that we are to live out what we know to be true. God will keep teaching us along the journey, but we must be responsive to what we know to be true along the way.

Responding to 3:15,16 what do you know to be true?

What is the purpose of life?

What are we supposed to be “laying hold of” in response to being “laid hold of by Christ Jesus?” In other words, what is the one thing I should be doing with my life?

Application

1. This text is very sobering and should not be taken lightly. At some point we must do away with all excuses and choose to press on toward the goal for the prize. What in your life needs to change to be able to say, “This one thing I do”? Be specific.
2. What practical things can the group do to help each member “press on”?
3. Spend time asking God to help you live what you know to be true, based on His Word.