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“Living On Purpose”

Philippians 3 Small Group Plan

In Philippians 3, Paul gives us his spiritual biography:

- ✓ In verses 1-11 he describes his painful past.
- ✓ In verses 12-16 he describes his journey in the present.
- ✓ In verses 17-21 he describes his exciting future.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- How would you describe your spiritual past?
- How does it differ from your spiritual present?
- What do you hope for your spiritual future?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— FORGETTING ... STRAINING —

Philippians 3:12-16

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

- In these verses (v. 12-13) Paul does not sound discouraged when he admits that he has not achieved his goal. Why?
- What discourages you in your spiritual race?

- When Paul says he is “forgetting what is behind” (v. 13) what is he choosing to leave in the past and why?
- When he says he is “straining towards what is ahead” (v. 13) what is calling him and pulling him forward?
- How would you describe the emotion and the depth of feeling in Paul statement — “one thing I do” (v. 13)?

— WATCHING ... WEeping —
Philippians 3:17-19

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.

- In this letter, devoted to joy, this is the only mention of tears (v. 18).
- What is bringing tears to Paul’s eyes?
- Think of Paul’s phrase “enemies of the cross of Christ” (v. 18).
 - Describe a life that submits to the model of the cross?
 - Describe a life that opposes the model of the cross?
- What is happening when a “mind” (v. 19) is “set” on earthly things? Describe what is happening *in* that mind and describe the consequences.

— WAITING ... CHANGING —
Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

- What does a citizen of heaven look like? What is their focus? What are their goals? What are their motives? Describe their relationships.
- Describe a life that is looking for Jesus to return — “eagerly awaiting” (v. 20).
- What is Jesus changing or transforming in each of his followers?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Using Paul's analogy of the race, where do you see yourself — (1) on the sidelines watching, (2) warming up, (3) at the starting line, (4) or running hard? Explain your answer.
- What have we "*already attained*" (v. 16) that challenges us each day to live right?
- Paul says, "*our citizenship is in heaven*" (v. 20). Would you say that you are **more likely** to strive for excellence as an American/Texan or as a Christian? Explain.
- What is most likely to distract you and pull you off the track and out of the race?
- Close with a moment of silence allowing the group members to visual themselves in the spiritual race, preparing to run, starting to run and running hard. Then pray for God's protection against the "*enemies of the cross.*"