

Life Group Leader Guide

April 14, 2024

Philippians 3:12-4:1

[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. [13] Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [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. [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.

[4:1] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. (ESV)



Intro to Passage

If we cannot earn our salvation, why struggle and strive for holiness? If in the end, all that matters is the righteousness of Jesus, why would I try to grow in my holiness? Paul's assault on his opponents who put their confidence in the flesh in the previous passage leaves us with these daunting questions. Didn't Jesus earn my salvation already? Why live any differently than I once did?

Context

Having just declared the uselessness of his previous "religious acclaims," Paul shifts into a section where he describes the reason he continues to press on toward Christ. Though his piety and growth is not where his confidence for eternity is placed, he continues to run faster towards Jesus, the loving savior who captured him. Jesus already took hold of Paul, therefore Paul makes it his life's purpose to take hold of Him! This is a beautiful picture of our purpose, help, and hope as we live our lives in light of the gospel.

Digging Deeper: Study Questions

1. Read and consider verse 13. Paul tells us that he presses on, forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward to what lies ahead. This is a helpful and vivid metaphor, but it is also somewhat unclear. What exactly are the things Paul is "forgetting and leaving behind?" Perhaps his old life of sin? Perhaps his previous religious convictions? His old relationships and fidelities? Discuss with your groups what you think Paul is referring to here and why.
2. Verse 20 describes believers as having "citizenship in heaven." Citizenship was very important to the culture of Philippi. It was an honor, a seal of protection, and a claim to many benefits. Flesh out in your group what is entailed by having "citizenship in heaven." A long list of benefits could be made here!



Application Questions

1. Paul calls the Philippian church to imitate him in verse 17. Consider the value and safety there is in having mature brothers and sisters to look up to. The ESV translation offers a helpful image: “keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.” Discuss in your group some of the helpful examples you have had in your life. Use this time to also consider others in our church you could “keep your eyes on” for the sake of growth in maturity.
2. After calling the Philippians to follow his example, Paul mentions that many now walk as enemies of the cross (v 18). Something to notice here is Paul’s emotion in discussing them. He tells of them “with tears.” Does your heart break for brothers and sisters you have seen walk away from the Lord? Consider some of these, so that you may not walk in the same errors, then take some time to pray for them.
3. In 4:1 Paul refers to his brothers and sisters in Philippi as those “whom he loves and longs for, his joy and his crown.” What a beautiful way of speaking of his fellow Christians. Are there people in your life that you feel this way about? And more than that, are there people in your life that you would say this to? Paul gives a sincere compliment and a wonderful encouragement in these words. Our culture often shies away from intimate encouragement like this. How can we as believers be more bold to voice our affection for each other?



Prayer Guide

- Pray for yourself.
- Pray for our church.
- Pray for others.
- Pray for the world.
- *Missionary Highlight:* Brian and Kim Burchell - Based in the United States, Kim and Brian work with the Jesus Film Project collaborating with national ministries and mission organizations focused on southeast Asia. Please pray for continued discernment and wisdom as they lovingly bring the Jesus Film to this region of the world, along with safety, health, and physical stamina as they travel.

