

YOU

Bible Study

Sermon Series: Essentials of Christianity

To be used with: The Purpose of Humanity

Sermon Title Possibilities: To Know Christ Fully

Scripture: Phil. 3:12-14

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group session “The Purpose of Humanity,” this sermon will articulate the biblical and life-long steps one would need to take in an effort to fully know Christ and experience Him throughout eternity.

Introduction: We all have goals. A teenager can have a goal of running a sub seven-minute mile. A working adult can have a goal of a six-figure salary. Goals help to determine and direct our actions. The way we behave should push us towards the accomplishment of our goals. Paul had a goal and that was to know Christ fully and thus fulfill his purpose in life. He told the church at Philippi the steps he took in striving after this goal. Let’s see what his actions were and determine how we can follow them today.

1. We haven’t reached our goal yet (v. 12)

Paul acknowledges two important facts in the opening of verse 12. We first see that he had not reached his goal as of yet. We find the goal in the context of verses 1-11 and that was to know Christ fully. Paul understood that it was going to take a lifetime to fulfill this goal and was therefore staying focused upon this calling.

Paul also acknowledges that he had not become fully mature in his faith. The CSB says that he was not “already perfect.” A word study here shows that the word “perfect” means to be mature or fully grown in one’s faith. James used the same word to encourage the church as they endured persecution (James 1:4). Paul knew that he still was not where he fully wanted to be in his faith journey and was therefore still focused on his relationship with Jesus.

The fact that Paul had been striving after Christ and yet not achieving his desired goal did not stop him. Instead, it emboldened him. He said that he was making every effort to hold onto this goal. This phrase shows a specific and consistent action to quickly and energetically pursue a desired outcome. He was not going to let anything stop him.

We would be wise to learn from Paul today. We too need to acknowledge that we have room to grow in our faith journey; no matter how long we have been on this journey. We would also be wise to personally take hold of this calling and not let

anything stop us from seeking to achieve the goal of knowing Christ more and more each day. At times we allow good things to keep us from the best. We need to stay focused.

2. Let's keep reaching for our goal (v. 13)

Paul did not let his past stop him from reaching for his present goal of knowing Christ fully. He embraced two specific actions in order to achieve this. First, he actively chose to forget his past. The original language of the phrase "forgetting what lies behind" shows a habitual action done in the moment. This was not a one-time action on his part, but rather something he embraced over and over. If we look at some of Paul's other writings, we learn that he was not ignoring what he had done in the past. Instead, he was not going to allow his past to hinder his current or future.

His second action was to reach forward towards the goal ahead. A study of this phrase reveals similar insights. This too was not a one-time action, but rather a habit. Paul was focused on what was ahead of him and the calling Jesus had placed upon his life. What would it look like today if we as a church embraced these actions within our own lives? Paul's background, while troubling at times, was not going to stop him from fulfilling his purpose of knowing Christ fully. Furthermore, he was not going to be content with the status quo, but rather he desired to continually reach forward to what lay ahead of him. If we were to make these habits in our lives, we would be more apt to understand our purpose as humanity.

3. Our goal is worth it (v. 14)

It always feels rewarding when a goal is achieved. All of the work and effort put towards the goal is realized and it is more than worth it. Paul had a goal of knowing Christ fully. When he breathed his last and saw the risen Savior face-to-face, he achieved the prize and was rewarded for his faithfulness to the calling placed upon him. The goal of a sub seven-minute mile, while noble will leave you wanting. The goal of a six-figure salary, while adventurous will leave you wanting. The goal of fulfilling humanities purpose of knowing, serving an honoring Christ with all that you are is the only true goal that will not leave us wanting more. It takes a lifetime of service to achieve, but it will be more than worth it throughout eternity.

Conclusion: It is vital that we look at one last phrase in verse 14 in order to fully understand the text and calling. Paul said that his goal and pending prize was found in Christ Jesus (emphasis added). There is a marked difference between being with Christ Jesus and in Christ Jesus. With indicates being close to and in shows a personal relationship. The achievement of the goal of fully knowing Christ can only be found in a personal relationship with Him. Do not leave here today without this relationship. You, like Paul, will not be disappointed in the end.

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