

## WARM-UP

- Who would you consider the greatest athlete of all time? What do you think made this person great?
- Are you the kind of person who would participate in a game even without a prize? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Recall a time when you had to do something different (e.g., move to a different city or change jobs) but had a hard time because you preferred what was comfortable. What happened?

**WORD** *<sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup>that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death . . .*

**PHILIPPIANS 3:8-10**

As a church leader, the apostle Paul had many accomplishments. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are attributed to him. The book of Acts describes the crucial role he played in planting and establishing many of the early churches. He was unstoppable in advancing God's kingdom. But the verses Paul penned to the Philippians show us that he considered all of these accomplishments as worthless and insignificant compared to the overwhelming joy he felt in knowing Christ. He was set on achieving only one thing—to gain Christ and be found in Him. In this lesson, we will look at how we can persevere in our pursuit of Christ as demonstrated by Paul.

## 1 | Forget what lies behind.

*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind . . .* **PHILIPPIANS 3:13**

Paul knew that he hadn't yet received his prize. There was only one course of action—to press on. He did this by *forgetting what lies behind*. Like Paul, we have to stop looking at the things in our past. Keeping our eyes on what's behind us will hinder us from seeing what's before us. Whether they be accomplishments or failures, the things in the past can keep us from stepping forward. How did God enable you to overcome something in the past that kept you from pursuing His purpose in your life?

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## 2 | Strain forward to what lies ahead.

*. . . and straining forward to what lies ahead . . .* **PHILIPPIANS 3:13**

Paul understood that not yet receiving the prize meant there were greater things waiting for him in the days ahead—more of God for him to know, more opportunities to live out his freedom in Christ, and more people waiting to experience the same freedom. Like Paul, we need to *strain forward*, exerting effort to take those necessary steps, in faith that God is leading us to accomplish His will. Sometimes it's not the things of the past that keep us from moving forward, but the comfort of the present. Paul encourages us to strain forward and continue our diligent pursuit of Christ. Why must we not be comfortable where we are?

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### 3 | Set your sights on the goal.

... *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* **PHILIPPIANS 3:14**

The reason Paul was able to overcome suffering and have joy was that his eyes were set on the prize. His prize was not anything he could accomplish on earth for God, but God Himself. Since he surrendered his life to Christ, Paul's motivation for everything he did for God was to pursue Him until the day he would meet Him in heaven. In the same way, we are to focus our eyes on Jesus. Regardless of what we are facing at this time, we can overflow with joy knowing that they are all temporary. We can continue pursuing Christ no matter what because we know that in the end, we will gain Him for eternity. How have you experienced the joy of the *surpassing worth of knowing Christ* and how did this change the way you live your life?

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#### APPLICATION

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything in your past or present that hinders you from moving forward. Talk to someone who can help you and pray with you to overcome this.
- How would setting your sights on the ultimate goal of gaining Christ change a specific area in your life? What is something you can do differently starting this week in line with this?
- Thank God for the enduring joy that comes from pursuing Christ. Ask Him to give you opportunities to share that joy to your family and friends this week.

