

Philippians 3:1-11 Discussion Questions

Sermon Outline

Intro

- "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness." - Oscar Wilde
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 - Pursuit of perfection
 - Practice doesn't necessarily make perfect
 - Stand firm

Pursuit of perfect (v.12-16)

- Paul openly confesses that he has not fully reached the perfection
- Perfect refers to his desire to know Christ, to know the power of the resurrection and to share in his suffering from Philippians 3.8-11
- A singular focus to pursue this perfection
 - An allusion to running
 - Forget what is behind
 - Straining towards the goal
 - Press towards the upward call of God in Christ Jesus
 - 2 theories
 - Olympic language of receiving the prize from a highly revered official
 - A call into the kingdom of God
- Maturity requires humility

Practice doesn't necessarily make perfect (v.17-21)

- Paul calls them to imitation of his manner of life and the example of those who walk in a similar fashion
- Paul laments those who are enemies of the cross
 - Who are they?
 - Seemingly believers who may profess belief, but lack a manner of living consistent with that belief
- Four descriptions of enemies of the cross
 - Their end is destruction- eternal consequence
 - Their god is their belly- ruled by their desires and appetites
 - Jeremiah 17.9

- They glory in their shame- take pride in those things that do not result in glory
- Minds set on earthly things- concerned with things of no eternal consequence
 - Colossians 3.1-5
- Four descriptions of faithful examples
 - Citizenship in heaven
 - Await their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
 - Longing to be transformed from shame to glory
 - With power that enables him to subject all things to himself

Stand Firm (v.1)

Implications

- Right belief must lead to right behavior
- A safe place for the immature

Discussion Questions

Feel free to choose what questions will be most helpful to your group to grow in their understanding of the Scripture and faithfully apply it to their lives.

Read Phil 3:12-4:1

1. Paul begins this passage by affirming that he hasn't already obtained what he is pursuing. What is he pursuing (see vv. 10-11)?
 - a. Do you find Paul's confession that he is still in process encouraging or discouraging? Why?
 - b. How does Paul respond to the reality that he is "not there yet?" What encourages him to persevere? (See the end of v. 12)
 - c. Are you confident that Christ has laid hold of you? What gives you this confidence? What is this confidence based upon?
 - d. How have you seen evidence of "Christ holding onto to you" in your own life?

2. How does Paul “press on?” How does he describe what he does?

a. Which of these two are you better at and which is more challenging for: leaving your past behind you or working hard to move forward toward what God has for you? Why do you think that is?

b. What is God currently calling you to forget about?

c. In what way is God currently calling you to “strain forward” in your pursuit of Him and what He offers?

d. What has God provided you with to help you make this move?

3. Paul goes on to explain that the mature thinks “this way,” meaning that first they recognize that they still have a ways to go. And while they aren’t perfect in Christ yet, they work hard to pursue perfection in Jesus, knowing that God will call them upward to himself.

a. If this is the mark of maturity, where do you see the evidence of God’s maturing work in your life?

4. In v. 17 Paul exhorts the Philippians to follow his example, even though he already admitted that he is still in process. This shows us how God uses imperfect people to disciple and help other imperfect people follow the only perfect person: Jesus.

a. What are some of the most impactful “imperfect” examples that Jesus has used in your life? Who has been instrumental in your life in helping you to learn how to follow Jesus better?

b. How did they do this?

c. Who has God placed in your life that he has called you to be setting an example for? In other words, who are your actively discipling?

d. In what ways have you been trying to pass on the lessons and example that you were impacted by?

e. How might you learn from those who have impacted you, and be more intentional about discipling others in the same way?

5. Paul goes on to highlight those who live lives that are in opposition to the gospel. How does he characterize them?

a. Where do you see the most danger for yourself?

b. How have you seen the Lord work to expose these things in your own life, and how has he taught you to walk in victory over them?

6. How do you see God currently working in you to help you to stand firm? How can we (the group) be praying for you in this area? Where do you need God's grace to help you persevere?