

Keep Moving Forward

From the very beginning, God has been at work with a primary goal. The Bible teaches in Colossians 1:16 that all things were created through Christ and for Christ. In Psalm 19:1-4 the heavens were created to declare God's glory; and in Isaiah 43:7, humanity was formed for His glory. Everything God has done has a purpose and a goal – for Him to be glorified.

Genesis 1:26–27 tells us that we were made in the *image of God (imago Dei)*, meaning we were uniquely created to reflect His character and represent Him on earth. We are designed to display His love, justice, mercy, creativity, and wisdom as we steward His creation.

Because we are made in His image, we also are created to work toward meaningful goals that honor Him. Our desire to accomplish something is not accidental—it is part of God's plan.

Even our biology reflects this design. God created our brains to release a neurotransmitter, dopamine, when we accomplish meaningful goals. Our God has created to find satisfaction in accomplishing a Goal.

So, if you were to be honest right now, and not give the Sunday school answer, what would you say your goals are?

As a parent, your goals may be:

1. Equip children with life skills that are necessary to thrive as adults.
2. Teach them Core Values: empathy, respect, and tolerance for others.
3. Help children navigate difficult situations, manage distress, and develop healthy habits (such as sleep and nutrition).
4. To put it simply, you want to raise good kids.

Teenagers set goals:

1. As a student: you may be working towards improving your GPA or raising your ACT.
1. Financially: you want to find your first job so you can save up for a car.
2. Athletically: you may be looking to land a starting position on a team or increase your playing time.
3. Musically: you may want to make all west or advance to the next chair in band.
4. In social media: you may want to increase your followers or likes.
5. Or you may just want to improve your score in Grand Theft Auto 6, Roblox, or Minecraft.

If you are a businessman, your goals may include:

1. Increase sales, decrease cost, increase productivity, improve profitability.
2. Elevate brand awareness, improve market share, and explore product diversification.
3. Raise customer satisfaction and foster a positive company culture.

(Picture of brick)

Before I came to work at our church over 27 years ago, I worked for a fortunate 500 company – Shaw Industries. Mr. Shaw constantly set aggressive goals for our company. A one was when he set a goal to increase sales from 500 million to 3 billion in 10 years. He said we were going to knock down the walls and gave a brick to each one. This led our company to explore every possible avenue to reach this goal – product diversification, modification in sales strategies, and so on.

I could go on and on talking about goals regarding our health, our relationships, or our finances. But I want to draw your attention to Philippians chapter 3 verse 10. In this verse, the Apostle Paul shares what his goal is, and it should be the number 1 goal for each follower of Christ. It would appear to be 3 goals, but actually it is

one goal. I am quoting from the Holman Standard version.

Philippians 3:10 My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death,

Let's pray.

The Right Goal

So, what is the right goal for followers of Christ, first it is to know Christ

To Know Christ

The first and greatest desire of Paul - his life goal - is "that I may know Him." Paul is not merely satisfied with intellectual knowledge. Paul already possessed extensive knowledge about Jesus. He knew the Old Testament prophecies and had personally encountered the risen Christ on the Damascus Road. Yet his greatest desire, his goal, was to know Christ more fully.

In the Bible, the word "know" frequently describes a personal, intimate relationship rather than merely acquiring information. It denotes fellowship and communion.

Paul's desire was to experience Christ daily, growing in intimacy with Him through faith, obedience, worship, and dependence upon His grace. Knowing Christ means

entering into a living relationship in which Christ continually transforms the believer's heart, mind, and character.

And the good news is that Jesus desires an intimate relationship with us.

Revelation 3:20 - See! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

A couple may know basic facts about each other on their wedding day, but genuine intimacy grows through years of shared experiences, conversations, joys, and trials.

In the same way, our relationship with Christ deepens as we walk with Him daily through prayer, Scripture, worship, obedience, and service.

Knowing Christ is not an academic exercise. It is relational.

And it begins in Paul's future clarification of his goal to know Jesus; he wanted to know the power of his resurrection.

The Power of the Resurrection

This power refers first to the divine power God demonstrated when He raised Jesus from the dead. The resurrection publicly declared Christ's victory over sin,

death, Satan, and the grave. It confirmed Jesus as the Son of God and validated His saving work on the cross.

However, Paul is not merely interested in believing that the resurrection occurred historically. He desires to experience this personally. The same divine power that raised Christ from the dead is now active in every believer.

Romans 6:4 - Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.

The power of the resurrection makes you a new person.

2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

The power of the resurrection not only gives you a new set of priorities but a positive outlook for the future.

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 - ⁵⁴When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place:

Death has been swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵Where, death, is your victory?

Where, death, is your sting?

When we are saved, we who were spiritually dead because of sin are made alive in Christ. We receive a new heart, a new identity, new desires, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the beginning of resurrection life.

But our goal is to **not only know Christ and the power of His resurrection**, but also to **share in His sufferings**.

Fellowship of His Suffering

Sharing in His suffering may sound surprising. We naturally want to avoid pain. We want the victory of the resurrection without the pain of the cross. But suffering for Christ is not an exception to the Christian life—it is the normal path of every disciple.

Philippians 1:29 - For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,

1 Peter 4:12-13: 12 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed.

The Bible does not glorify pain. But suffering becomes meaningful because it draws us into deeper fellowship with Jesus.

Veterans often speak of a fellowship that can only be forged on the battlefield. In a similar way, there are aspects of knowing Christ that can only be experienced when obedience is costly. Trials become the place where we discover His presence, His comfort, His strength, and His faithfulness in ways that are impossible during seasons of ease.

But when we willingly obey and put ourselves into a position that we will suffer for being a follower of Christ, it refines us.

Romans 5:3-4 - And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, ⁴ endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

When we suffer for Jesus, it is preparing us for eternity.

2 Corinthians 4:17 - For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.

Paul endured beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, hunger, and constant danger and he is saying that suffering is **temporary. Today's burden is outweighed**

by tomorrow's glory. Temporary pain produces eternal gain.

So how can we do this? How can we reach the goal of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering?

And we must have the right priorities.

Right Priorities

Philippians 3:4-9 – ⁴although I have reasons for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; ⁶regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

⁷But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith.

One of the easiest mistakes we can make is confusing **good things** with **ultimate things – settling for the earthly rather than focusing on the eternal**. Sports are good. Education is good. Hard work is good. A moral reputation is good. Even religious activity is good. But when we look to those things to give us worth, security, or acceptance before others or even God, - when they become the most important things in our lives (and we know they are by how we spend our time, our money, and our energy) our priorities are not in order.

Paul knew exactly what that looked like.

Before meeting Christ, Paul had built an impressive spiritual résumé. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, passionate enough to persecute the church, and blameless according to the standards of the Law. If righteousness could be earned, Paul would have been at the front of the line.

Then everything changed.

He met Jesus on the Damascus Road, and it changed his priorities. The things he once listed as assets, he now listed as liabilities. "Whatever gain I had," he writes, "I counted as loss for the sake of Christ." They aren't necessarily sinful. But he is saying they are insufficient. They could never accomplish what he once believed they could. They could not make him right with God.

In fact, those very accomplishments had become obstacles.

The question for us is simple: What occupies first place in our lives? Are we being obedient to the Lord's command:

Matthew 6:33 - But seek first the kingdom of God^[a] and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Are we heeding our Lord's warning:

Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Our most important goal should not be pleasure, success, status, or even religious activity. Our goal should be to know Christ. When He becomes our highest treasure, every other priority finds its proper place.

So, we need to have the right goal, the right priority, and we need to follow the right process.

THE RIGHT PROCESS

We begin by being conformed to His death.

Philippians 3:10-11: My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, ¹¹ assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.

As followers of Jesus, we must not only experience Christ's resurrection power, but we must also embrace the Cross of Christ. The word "**conformed**" describes an ongoing process of being shaped into the likeness of Jesus. Paul is speaking about a daily surrender of self. Every day, believers are called to crucify pride, selfish ambition, sinful desires, and the craving for recognition so that the life of Christ may be increasingly seen in them.

Romans 6:6 - For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin,

The old self has been crucified so that a new life of obedience may emerge.

This conformity follows the very pattern Paul celebrated in Philippians 2.

Philippians 2:6-8 - who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. ⁷ Instead he emptied

himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

The cross is where we go for salvation, but it is also the blueprint for how we should live each and every day. As believers continually die to themselves, they become increasingly like Christ, anticipating the day when they will be fully transformed into His glorious likeness.

If we want to reach our goal, we must die to self every day, we must be conformed to the cross need to:

Pursue Christ with Passion

Philippians 3:12-14 - Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, ¹⁴ I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.

Paul would say, "Don't look back." Don't live on yesterday's victories or yesterday's failures. Keep your eyes on Christ. Keep moving forward. The prize is not a medal, a title, or earthly success. The prize is Christ Himself.

Paul's life was marked by relentless pursuit towards the ultimate but notice what he says first: **"Not that I have already obtained all this or have already been made perfect."** The greatest Christian who ever lived did not claim to have arrived. Instead, he admitted he was still working – still growing.

That is the first lesson about pursuing Christ: **never confuse progress with perfection.** Spiritual maturity is not reaching the finish line; it is refusing to stop running.

The more Paul grew in Christ, the more he realized that spiritual maturity is not marked by self-confidence but by humble dependence.

So, what are the steps you have to take in reaching the goals.

Like a runner entering the final stretch of a race, Paul refuses to look behind. He leaves behind both his failures and his accomplishments. He will not be distracted by past regrets or past successes. His eyes are fixed on the finish line as he strains toward the prize of knowing Christ fully.

Colossians 3:2 - Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Keep your eyes on the finish line, next remove any hinderances:

Colossians 3:5 - Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

Our hindrances are often our sinful nature, but they are not the only hindrances in our lives, you can be hindered by the good things in our lives that take priority over God.

To be conformed into the image of Jesus includes focusing on Him, removing sinful tendencies; and you must strive daily to be more like Him.

Colossians 3:12-13 - Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

(Picture of miracle mile)

In the 1954 "Miracle Mile," John Landy led Roger Bannister for nearly the entire race. But as they entered the final stretch, Landy glanced over his shoulder to see where Bannister was. In that instant, Bannister surged past him on the opposite side and won the race.

Paul would say, "Don't look back." Don't live on yesterday's victories or yesterday's failures. Keep your eyes on Christ, remove hindrances, and strive to be more like Jesus. And here is the takeaway truth for today:

KEEP MOVING FORWARD. (Slide)

(Picture Rocky Balboa)

It reminds me of a scene from one of my favorite movies – Rocky Balboa.

The scene takes place outside **Adrian's Restaurant** in Philadelphia, where Rocky Balboa, played by Sylvester Stallone, confronts his adult son, Robert Jr. Robert expresses frustration about living in his father's shadow and fears the consequences of Rocky's boxing comeback. Rocky responds with a motivational speech, emphasizing personal responsibility and perseverance – a message that if you want to reach your goals, if you want to win in life, you got to:

KEEP MOVING FORWARD (Slide).

Invitation (image magnification of me)

So, what is keeping you from reaching the ultimate goal of knowing Christ and the power of is resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering?

Is it regret? Are you letting pass failures hinder you in the race you are running.

So, what are you going to do – you are going to forget what is behind, focus on the goal and

(Slide) KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

(Image magnification of speaker)

Has your success filled you so full of yourself that you don't see a need for God?

So, what are you going to do – you need to humble yourself, focus on the goal, remove pride, and

(Slide) KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

(Image magnification of speaker)

Is comfort, recreation, or enjoyment distracting and hindering you from God's goal for your life.

So, what are you going to do – you are going to reprioritize your life, focus on the goal and

(Slide) KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

(Image magnification of speaker)

To do that we have to have (show on the screen):

- 1. The Right Goal**
- 2. The Right Priorities**
- 3. The Right Process**

Our staff and worship team are coming forward now. So, in your seat, right now, examine your life and see if you have the right goal, the right priorities, and are following the right process. If not, repent and ask God to help you to Keep moving forward.

But if you haven't understood that you are a sinner, that you aren't perfect, and that you are separated from God; if you haven't agreed with God, confessed your sins and asked for forgiveness – you can't Keep moving Forward. Because you are going the wrong way. God may be calling to you right now, telling you turn around and run to cross. Turn to Him for forgiveness and salvation. If you want to do that, come to one of our staff and they will help you do that right now.

Let's pray.