

## **Focus for the Journey**

### **INTRO:**

What should you do when you get lost in the woods? Lots of survival shows, survival apps, Army Ranger Jungle Survival Manual for just a couple of bucks on discount at the big fancy book store.

Should you try to find your way out, or stay put and wait for others to find you?

Lost in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade.

Staying put has been taught some because so many people have gotten disoriented and ended up walking in circles.

One survival show pointed out that staying put if you don't have water, shelter or food is stupid!

So how do you make progress? How do you keep from going in circles? You find a point in the distance (hopefully in a helpful direction) and keep walking toward it!

Much like lawn mowing. "Holidays" when I was a kid just happened when I watched the line and tried to be "efficient." They didn't happen when I walked toward the goal, and gave some "overlap."

Focus is important for the Journey...any journey. Where are you going? How do you get there?

I have heard that commercial jet planes are off course 95% of the time. How do they EVER arrive safely when they are off course nearly all the time? They keep correcting and heading toward their destination! They know (most of the time) where they are going! And they keep heading that way, even if wind, rotation of the earth, curve of the earth, flight paths of other jets, restricted airspace, etc. get in the way!

Believe it or not...us ending up at our "destination" with Jesus... is AT LEAST as important as a plane ending up at the right airport!

**Text: Philippians 3:12-16**

English Standard Version (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

**I. Loosing Focus Danger #1: “I have arrived!”**

**A. Vs. 12**

<sup>12</sup>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.

**B. One of the great dangers in our spiritual journey is feeling, believing and acting like we have arrived. We have “made it.”**

1. It’s like being at the Bay Day Race every year. You have the number on your chest, a bike in the lot, a kayak on the grass, the gun goes off, everyone starts running, and you just stand there, blocking traffic, then go get yourself some cotton candy. You have been there. You were at the race...but you never actually ran it, completed it, or even tried!

\* Being AT the race is not the same as being IN the race.

2. Marriage. Many marriages struggle because people stop working at being married when they get married. They feel that they have arrived.

-The “Switch.” I tell them all, no one believes me, it happens to everyone of them!

-When you are dating, you turn on the charm, you put your best foot forward, you try to win them. Men, you’re on your best behavior. Women, you are always trying to look your best. You overlook a lot of things that irritate you, you give up your preferences for theirs, and you are happy to do it.

-Once you’re married, the switch flips, you’ve “Got” them, and you don’t have to work at it any more...there is a personality shift.

-One of the keys to a great marriage is that you have to always be trying to win over your partners heart! It’s like a never ending courtship!

-Now, I am not saying I am very good at this...but I am trying!  
\* Being Married is not the same as being IN a marriage!

C. We are looking for the badge, the club membership card, that status symbol that says "You are in!"

1. Remember: Members Only Jackets. Designer Jeans. Popped Collars. The list goes on and on...the right clothes, the right car, the right "friends", the right job, the right house, having tats, not having tats, being in a relationship, what ever symbol we might use to define ourselves as better than someone else. As "In" vs. being "out."
2. We tend to do this in our spiritual life as well. In our spiritual journey it is ever so common, but ever so dangerous to have an "I have arrived" mentality.

-I prayed the prayer of salvation.

-I was baptized in Water.

-I am a member of the church.

-I attend church regularly, and put money in the offering.

-I have served in \_\_\_\_\_ ministry for 95 years!

-I am a good person.

3. It can be just about anything that we rest on and say, "this is my proof that I have arrived."

-These things don't make us followers of Christ IN relationship and on the Journey WITH Christ any more than sitting in McDonald's makes you a hamburger or sitting in a garage makes you a car or wearing a T-shirt make you a superhero!

4. In Matthew 3:9, Luke 3:8, and John 9:39 Jesus confronted people that seemed to have a very legitimate "badge of membership." They were "Children of Abraham...God's chosen people. It was a matter of pride. They were better than other people! It was their "Guarantee of Salvation" Jesus said, it's no big deal...God can raise up children of Abraham from the rocks lying on the ground! This badge has no legal standing in God's system!

D. Let us remember, that until Jesus comes back, we have not arrived.

1. We have to keep focused on the goal: Jesus Christ Himself.

2. Not heaven. Not being holy. Not being a good person. Not overcoming sin. Not healing. Not great worship services. Not helping others or doing good deeds.
3. Our primary focus, our goal, our drive must be to know, love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ!
4. The other things are “fringe benefits” if you will. They are a part of the “family package,” but not what we are seeking after.
5. You have not arrived...keep chasing after Jesus!
6. Beautiful Picture: He is chasing after you as well!
7. Have you settled into an “I have arrived” way of thinking? What would it look like in your life if you really believed that you had not yet arrived?

## **II. Loosing Focus Danger #2: “I will just wait for it to come to me.”**

### **A. Vs. 13**

<sup>13</sup>Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own.

B. Paul says that He did not fully “own it” yet. He still had some work to do, some progress to make, and he wasn’t going to just sit around and “let it happen.” Sometimes we know that have not “arrived” but we are not moving forward. How do we say it in New England? “I am all set.”

1. We are just going to sit back and wait for it! We live like some day we are just magically going to be different, grown up spiritually and full of faith. We don’t know how it’s going to happen. But if God wants it to...it will happen!
2. “When God wants me to give up this destructive habit, he will take it away from me!”
3. When God wants me to \_\_\_\_\_ (name any spiritual discipline, gift, etc.), he will give it to me.
4. When God wants me to know more about the Bible, he will just put it in my head.
5. When God wants me to spend more time with Him, my schedule will permit it, and I will want to do that!
6. That is just not scriptural!

C. Salvation, adoption into God’s family is a Free gift. There is nothing you can do to earn it! But it’s such a huge gift that it changes everything!

1. The King adopting a homeless street child.

## 2. Philippians 2: 12-16

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup>Do all things without grumbling or disputing,<sup>15</sup>that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, <sup>16</sup>holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

3. There is this partnership between God and us, working His life INTO us! God is doing His great work, and we are seeking to allow Him. It's more active than just sitting back and waiting for God to do everything for us.
4. How are you actively, deliberately engaged in growing toward Christ?

### III. Loosing Focus Danger #3: “Just look at my past.”

#### A. vs. 13b-14

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

- B. Anyone else have 20/20 hindsight? We can see what we should have done. We can see our mistakes. We have memorized our regrets. Sometimes, we even allow ourselves, and our future to be defined by our past!
- Your past mistakes.
  - Your limits.
  - Your family tree.

Stop focusing on your past, and put your eyes on Jesus!

- C. God takes pleasure in using the weak things of this world to confound the wise, so that HE get's the glory!

1. Moses was an 80 year old man, with a speech impediment, busy working as a nomadic shepherd in the middle of the desert, who was once a privileged rich kid, that was wanted for murder, when God called him to deliver over 1 million people out of slavery to the most powerful kingdom in the world at that time!
2. David was the youngest of his brothers, not even important enough in his father's eyes to be brought in from the fields when a big feast was called and the prophet said, “Bring all your sons.” Yet

he was the one that God picked to become the greatest King in Israel's history!

3. Peter was a brash, rough, loud, big mouthed, working class fisherman, who, after three and a half years with Jesus, denied even knowing him! Yet God chose Him to preach the first sermon in the first gathering of the first Christian church...and 3000 people committed their lives to Jesus!
4. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, but she also was chosen by God to be one of the first people to witness and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus!
5. Paul was enemy #1 to the early church, and yet God chose him to be one of the greatest missionaries of all time, and to be the person who wrote nearly half the books of the New Testament!

D. The list goes on and on...unlikely candidates where just the ones God chose!

1. And God has chosen you!
  2. Stop listening to the lies of the enemy! Stop being tied up and focused on your past! It's NOT about you! It's not about what you can or can not do. It's about who HE is and what He can do THROUGH YOU!
  3. "What can God do through me," you ask?
- 4. 2 Corinthians 5:17** (ESV)

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.<sup>[a]</sup> The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

**5. Philippians 4:13** (ESV)

<sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**6. Romans 8:35, 37-39** (ESV)

<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

7. What do you need to do to leave your past in the past, and focus on your future in and with Jesus?

**Conclusion:**

Sometimes, in this life, it feels like we are wondering blindly in the woods. We are trying to make the best of it. We march on boldly, pretending like we know where we are going. Telling ourselves that we are in control! The reality is, we don't know where we are going, or what is going to happen next.

It's time to fix our eyes on Jesus! And simply follow Him wherever he leads. Are you ready to do that? To fix your eyes on Him? Are you ready to chase after Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind and strength?

He is already chasing after you!

Are you ready to make Him the focus of your Journey?

Let's pray!

Small Group Notes:

The Journey Notes: