

Looking Back, Looking Forward

1. Warm-up question: During 2022, what was your favorite movie, TV show, book, or travel destination? Tell us why that was your favorite.
2. Read Philippians 3:7-14, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. In verse 8, Paul says, “I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” What do you think Paul means? Can you relate to Paul’s statement in your own life? How has faith changed your life?
 - b. In verse 9, Paul says he found “not a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ.” What’s the difference between righteousness that comes from the law versus righteousness that comes from faith?
 - c. In verse 10, Paul says, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” Do you feel like you are experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in your life? Say why or why not.
3. In verse 12, Paul acknowledges that life is a journey and growth is a process. He acknowledges that he has not already reached his goals, but keeps pressing forward. Then he makes a key statement that was our focus this past Sunday. In verse 13, Paul says, “This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.” Those are important words for us to consider as we stand on the threshold of a New Year. First, let’s focus on “forgetting what lies behind.”
 - a. There are at least two different ways we can get trapped in the past. Sometimes bad things happen that are hard to let go of. Other times something really good happens, and we find ourselves wishing we could go back to that time in life. Looking back over your life (and excluding the present), what has been the best season of your life so far? What made that season so wonderful? Are you ever tempted to wish you could trade the present for that past season? Why or why not?
 - b. When something really bad happens to us, that too can be hard to let go of. Jeff illustrated that point on Sunday by asking us to imagine pulling a blanket full of heavy objects behind us wherever we go. Bad memories from the past can be like that. Tell us about something negative that happened in your past that’s hard to let go of? How does holding on to that affect you?
 - c. Letting go of the past is easier said than done. What are some practical ideas that might help us let go of the past and not stay stuck there?
4. Now let’s turn our focus to “straining forward to what lies ahead.” Life is a precious gift. God wants us to make the most of the moment we find ourselves in right now.

In fact, one of the best ways to let go of the past is to get focused on our dreams for the present. So, as we move into the New Year, let's think about what it means to "strain forward to what lies ahead."

- a. We talked a bit earlier about the best past season in our life. But now let's turn our focus to the present season. What's something exciting and good about the present season of life you find yourself in?
- b. Making the most of life means striving to grow as we go. At its best, life is an ongoing process of becoming all that God dreamed we could be. That's why we naturally gravitate toward making New Year's Resolutions. Instinctively, we want to grow. Unfortunately, studies show that New Year's Resolutions are rarely kept. Creating change in our lives is REALLY HARD. But there are some specific things we can do to significantly increase the odds that we will achieve a goal we set. For starters, studies show that we're much more likely to reach a goal if we tell at least one other person about our goal. Why do you think that is? Why is it so important to share our goals with the people around us?
- c. Another reason we often don't meet our goals is because they're too vague and/or too extreme and lofty. Studies show that we're much more likely to reach a goal that is both specific and reasonably achievable. Tell us about a time you set a goal for yourself that was well-intentioned, but way too lofty to be achievable.
- d. With all the foregoing in mind, is there a goal that God has laid on your heart to stretch to achieve this year? If you're comfortable, please share your goal with the group. Do you feel your goal is specific enough and reasonably achievable?

Reminder

*If it would be helpful to you, our pastors are willing to pray with you about your goal every day for the next 21 days. Just go to **LifeJourney.church/links** and click on "**My New Year's Goal.**" Once you record your goal there, it will be forwarded to one of our pastors who will reach out to you to confirm that he/she will pray specifically for you each day. At the end of 21 days, that pastor will reach out again by text or email to ask how your goal is going. You are welcome to participate in this process if you feel it would be helpful.*

Philippians 3:7-14

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.