

Devoted to Pressing On

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” Philippians 3:13-14 (NLT)

A. We need to forget the past and press on toward what lies ahead in order to be the people God wants us to be.

1. Forgetting the past means letting go of the pain, hurt, and sins in our past.

“...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

- David, who wrote half the Psalms, was an adulterer, liar, and murderer. (Psalm 51)
- Mary Magdalene, the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection, was once possessed by seven demons. (John 20:11-18)
- Paul, the greatest missionary ever, was a self-righteous, religious zealot who tortured, imprisoned, and even helped murder Christians. (1 Timothy 1:15)

“...if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” 1 John 1:9 (NLT)

2. Forgetting the past means surrendering to God all of our failures, successes, strengths, and insecurities.

“I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him.” Philippians 3:7-9a (NLT)

3. “Pressing on” means surrendering all of my plans and my understanding of how things ought to be.

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 (MSG)

B. We need to forget the past and press on toward what lies ahead in order to be the church God wants us to be.

1. Forgetting the past means NOT saying things like, “We’ve never done it that way before.”

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)

2. “Pressing on” means going wherever God leads us and NOT giving in to fear.

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’” Isaiah 30:21(NIV)

“...you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, ‘The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, “The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.”’ Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them.

The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.’ In spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.” Deuteronomy 1:26-33 (NIV)

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT)

3. "Pressing on" means NOT giving up.

- On ministries to which God has called us - "So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith."
Galatians 6:9-10 (NLT)
- On each other - "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important." Galatians 6:1-3 (NLT)
- On our unbelieving family members, friends, and neighbors - "...don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants." 2 Timothy 2:23-26 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. How do you feel about the year ahead? Are you optimistic or pessimistic? Why?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 1 John 1:9. What do these verses mean to you? Who do you know who needs to be reminded of these verses right now?
3. Read John 16:12-13 and Isaiah 30:21. How does it make you feel to know that The Holy Spirit is ready, willing, and able to guide us personally and as a church every day in every decision? How does this work?
4. Read Isaiah 43:18-19. What new things have you seen God doing in our church? ...in your life?
5. Discuss Centerpoint's belief statement on the church. "The Church is the body of Christ, created by His Word and Spirit. The Church is not a religious institution, denomination, or building but is made up of all people everywhere and in every time who have surrendered their lives to Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God and to serve Him by faithfully doing His will on earth. All members of the church are called to ministry and service." (*Romans 12:4-10, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11-13*)
6. Read Deuteronomy 1:26-33 & 2 Timothy 1:7. When God told His people to conquer the Promised Land (*Numbers 14*), they stopped at the border and refused to go in because they were afraid of the opposition they would face. Share a time when you let fear stop you from doing something you knew was right.
7. Spend a few minutes praying as a group asking God to guide everyone in our church so that we make the most of every opportunity before us this year. Ask Him to give us wisdom, courage, creativity, and endurance for the year ahead. Also spend some time thanking Him for all that He has already done for us.
8. Discuss the following quotations:
"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." Corrie Ten Boom
"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." Jim Elliot
"Pain is inevitable, but misery is optional. We cannot avoid pain, but we can avoid joy." Tim Hansel