



# Reaching Forward

## Study Guide #1 The Call of Reaching Forward

**“CHURCHES ARE FULL OF SPIRITUAL CRIPPLES,** paralyzed by the grudges, bitterness, sins, and tragedies of the past. Others try to survive in the present by reliving past successes.” —John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament*

Throughout Scripture, one defining characteristic of God that we constantly see is that He is never stagnant. God is always guiding and moving His people forward. Why? Because the idea behind moving ‘forward’ is one of excitement, of action, a term that brings to mind the expectation of growth, progress, and new opportunities. Reaching forward becomes a partnership with God in His kingdom agenda, heeding his call to move ahead one step at a time. Reaching forward, ultimately, is all about extending God’s kingdom into tomorrow, always in His perfect timing, according to His perfect plan.

That is why this series of study guides will be addressing the concept behind giving ourselves to the bigger cause of God’s kingdom. It is the concept behind what it means to Reach Forward. Study Guide #1 addresses the reason why there is no room for mediocrity in the life of a child of God. God has a specific call on our lives as individuals and as a congregation to always be *reaching forward*, for we will never reach a stopping point this side of Christ’s second coming.

You are invited to begin your time with God this week with prayer:

*I belong to you, O Lord,  
because when I was still a sinner,  
You reached forward for me.  
As a continued response to your grace in my life,  
help me spend my time and my energy  
focused on reaching out to take hold of all that you  
have called me to.  
This time is Your time,  
so use this time of devotion and discussion  
for Your glory. Amen*

## Focus Scripture

Philippians 3:7-14 (NIV)

For context, read Philippians 3:1-6

*7But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, 14I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

### Thoughts From The Text

- ✚ Why did Paul consider all his achievements and attributes spoken of in verses 1-6 as worthless? (vs 7)
- ✚ What did Paul gain after comparing these two components of faith? (vss 8,9)
- ✚ Paul lists four intense desires in vss 10-11. What are they? Underline them.
- ✚ In addition to the four desires found in vss 10-11, what else does he mention he has not obtained? (vs 12)
- ✚ What are the two necessary activities that must occur to continue to experience growth in Christ-likeness and the surpassing value of knowing Christ? (vs 13)
- ✚ Paul is using the language of athletic games in vss. 13-14. Circle the words you see which may have their origin in athletics?
- ✚ Which words in our passage do you find that express urgency within Paul?

## Group Talk

- ❖ The New Living Translation states vs 7: “*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*” Share what you think Christ had done and what that had to do with making everything else in his life worthless.
- ❖ The word “know” in verse 10 means to have personal acquaintance or experience with.
  - 🌈 In your own words, what does it mean to “know Christ”?
  - 🌈 What does it mean to “know the power of his resurrection”?
  - 🌈 What does it mean to “know the fellowship of his suffering”?
  - 🌈 What does it mean to “attain the resurrection from the dead”?
- ❖ What is the perfection referred to in vs 12 and why is it important to strive to attain it?
- ❖ What do you think the message to the Philippians and to the church today might be in verse 15?
- ❖ What can you do to run a better race for the goal?
- ❖ What former acts of “religious” practice have you or do you need to set aside?

### THE CALL OF REACHING FORWARD

#### 1. REACHING LOOKING BACKWARD OR FORWARD

Paul has just made reference to the many things he had accomplished and the recognition that was due him. He is not only speaking here from a theological standpoint, but more so from experience. His profit is in reference to his life in Judaism, and the previous verses give reference to how good he was at it. So he is not looking from the outside in and making such claims. He had experienced from the highest achievements and knew that living in the highest ideals and being faultless at those ideals was nothing compared to the benefit he discovered in Christ. Further, the things he abandoned were done so because he came to realize that they were the very things that prevented him from coming to God and surrendering to Christ. He discarded them as one would throw cargo overboard to save a sinking ship.

📖 Read Jeremiah 9:23,24

Take note that the conclusion in which Paul arrived was actually a principle that God had already established. He had strived all his life FOR a right relationship with the God through the laws of Judaism. He spent a lot of energy and effort striving for something

that could not be achieved. Now, based on the gift of Christ, he finds himself exerting that same energy IN that relationship to achieve not what he can earn but what God wants him to receive.

## 2. PRESSING FORWARD

In vs 12 and 13, Paul uses the Greek word *katalambano* three times. NIV translates it "take hold of", KJV uses "apprehended". *Katalambano* means "seize, win, attain, make one's own". In vs 12 and 14, he uses Greek word *dioko*, which translates in the NIV to "press on", or in the KJV to "follow after" (vs. 12), "press" (vs. 14). It means "hasten, run, press on". Based on what he discovered about the Law and all the worthless striving and wasting of time, it means to cause to flee, to pursue in order to find or overtake; metaphorically to urgently race after. Placing these two terms together gives urgency and purpose in the same statement. As good as life or ministry could be for Paul, he knew through his relationship with Christ that there was so much more. When one comes to know Christ and then to desire to know more of Christ, this leads into Paul's description of pressing, striving to take hold of what is being pursued. It leaves the imagery of an athlete running a race and stretching for the finish line.

📖 Read 1 Timothy 6:12

His advice to Timothy seems to be not to settle for mediocrity or that there will ever be a point where he could rest on his laurels. Pressing forward, reaching forward is a generic call on all our lives because God is not a stagnant God.

## 3. LOOKING FORWARD

The word "goal" or "mark" in the KJV is Greek word *skopos*, from which we get our word "scope". It means specific or targeted. It is used here in the verb form to derive the idea "to look at, observe, contemplate", and eventually comes to mean the finish line one has in view at the end of a race.

📖 Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Paul uses an athletic event to described the Christian journey of faith. This being so, our opponent wants us to lag back and to take our eye off the goal and purpose of the race. As a church, as Greystone UMC, our goal is to reach each new generation for Christ, and the track on which we run is to put Jesus First in Our Lives, Our Church, and Our Community.

### Personal Reflection

A person's faith is revealed by his valuables. Or as Jesus put it, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

📖 Read Matthew 13:44-46

🔗 In both parables, when the kingdom was found, everything else was devalued and

considered expendable. Before we come to know Christ, we tend to place value on economic status, race, ethnic background, family, or heritage. But when we come to Christ, all else is to be devalued as useless in comparison to knowing Christ. Does that reflect your values? Or is knowing Christ just one of many things which you equally value?

- ☞ Paul speaks of "the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things". What have you lost in order to follow Christ?
- ☞ What might you have to leave behind in order to love Jesus and desire him with the same intensity as Paul? What keeps you from full obedience?