

GROW- Part 2 MATURING IN LIFE

Philippians 3:12-21

There are loads of books in Waterstone's 'health and Lifestyle' section all about personal growth (take a look)

The problem is- many are written by people who have no track record. They just wrote a book!

When I want to learn about personal growth and maturing as a person, I want somebody who's done it.

So who is our model?

- Jesus is. But the bible's full of other examples.
- The apostle Paul is one of them He was an incredible man. He lived life to the fullest. He made his life count.

In Philippians 3 we have Paul's autobiography.

- In the first 11 verses he deals with his past.
- In today's passage he deals with his present and his future. From it we can see the model for spiritual growth.
- Paul even encourages us to follow his example.

V. 17 "Brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example"

If you're anything like me- you learn much more about life from models than we do from manuals. So what can we learn from Paul?

1. EVALUATION: Face my faults.

- This is where you admit you don't have it all together, that you still have a long way to grow.
- You do an inventory of your life. You start by looking at the areas that need improvement.

Paul himself was honest about his faults.

V12-13 Message Trans **I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this**

That's an amazing statement!

- If anybody had the right to claim he had arrived it would be Paul.
- He wrote most of the New Testament. He single handedly spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Yet at the end of his life, says "I don't have it all together. I'm not perfect. I'm still growing." **The point is:** healthy people never stop growing. They are always developing, growing, learning.

That is so contrary to church culture today:

- Many Christians give you the impression they never have problems or doubts:
- The longer I grow as a Christian the more aware I've become of my own inadequacies, limitations, and faults.
- Rather than saying "Look how far I've come," I have to say, "Look how far I have to go!"

Paul says this is the starting point for spiritual health and growth -- to face your faults, be honest, do an evaluation.

- **Proverbs 28:13** "People who conceal their sins will not prosper."
- Transparency is a mark of emotional maturity.
- But many of us are afraid to admit our weaknesses because we are more bothered about our reputation than our character.
- You're going to have to choose -- Do I want to **look good** or do I want to **be good**?

"Where do I need to change?" Take a personal inventory.

(**CAMPAIGN LINK:** Part two: EHS Know yourself, that you may know God)

2. ELIMINATION: Forget the former; let go of your past.

- **Stop being manipulated by your past. V.13 "I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead"**
- Paul says if he is going to be all God wants him to be he's not going to waste any more time on yesterday.
- My past is past. I let go of my guilt, grief, and grudges.
- I let go of the past so I can get on with the present.
- Emotional and spiritual growth involves learning to forget.
- **Isaiah 43:18** "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a new thing!"

But how do you forget?

- To forget, actually means- don't let the past affect you anymore.
- Don't let it control you or have power over you or manipulate you.
- Healthy people learn from the past without living in the past.

Two things you need to forget if you are going to follow Paul's pattern:

1) Your failures.

- So many Christians continue to rehearse in their heart things that God has long since forgiven and forgotten. They won't forgive themselves.
- Everybody here has blown it. We have regrets.
- Paul, knew all about that: The Bible says in his B.C. days he was a persecutor of the church. He hounded people who were believers. He

held the coats of the men who stoned Steven to death.

- If Paul didn't let the past paralyze him- why should you?
- Nothing you can ever do will change your past. No tears, regrets, self-pity. Let it go. Learn from it and let it go.

2) Your successes.

- Learn from them but let go of them. It's so easy to rest on your laurels.
- To base your confidence on past performance.
- The problem with success is that it tends to make you complacent and fills you with pride.
- Then you stop growing and learning and developing further.

Luke 9:62 "Jesus said, `Anyone who starts to plow and then keeps looking back is of no use for the Kingdom of God."

(CAMPAIGN LINK: Session three- you've got to go back to go forward.)

III. CONCENTRATION: Focus on the future.

V. 13 "I focus on this one thing.....looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race.

Maturity demands you get focused- In Greek this is the word "one" with an exclamation point -- "ONE!"

- The most common disease in our culture Fragmentosis -- trying to do 100 different things at the same time.
- Jack of all trades; master of none. Most people are spread out too thin.
- Paul says, find out what counts. He's talking about the power of concentration.
- Light diffused is powerless and weak- but focus it enough and you have a laser.
- That is the power of concentration. Life focusing on one thing.
- Don't try to change everything at once. You'll fail. Focus on one thing.

Paul wanted to be able to stand at the end of his life and hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful in a few things. Come and share my joy."

So- "What is the ONE most important thing for me to focus on tight now so that my future and my life will be different. (EHS Session 1-5)

IV. DETERMINATION: Fight to the finish. Persistence.

- The principle of determination: Absolutely nothing worthwhile in life happens without effort.

The only way you coast is when you're going downhill. If you're coasting in life

right now you're headed downhill.

Paul said, v.14 **"I press on to reach the end."**

- The people you admire in life are just ordinary people with extraordinary amount of determination.
- They don't know how to quit. They keep on keeping on.
- "Press on" in the Greek literally means "I over extend myself. -- Maximum effort. No gain without pain.
- What would happen if Christians would put as much energy into growing as they do into making money or their favorite hobby?
- What would happen to this church? What would happen to your marriage? What would happen to your job? What sort of parent would you be if you grew emotionally and spiritually?

Acts 20:24 "But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me, in order that I may complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do, which is to declare the Good News of the grace of God."

- Paul said he's not going to stop. He's going to keep on keeping on until he's experienced all that God had for him in life.
- He wanted to finish the purpose for which God made him. And he did.

The last words of Paul are in the last book he ever wrote.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

(**CAMPAIGN LINK:** Week 4- Journey through the wall)

CONCLUSION:

V15 "Let all of who are spiritually mature agree on these things."

If you want to grow spiritually- emotionally- into the person you were meant to be...

- You're going to have to Face your faults, - Forget the former- Focus on the future, and Fight to the finish. All of us who are mature should act this way.

Two Promises to keep you going:

Galatians 6:9 "Let us not grow weary in doing good. For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this; that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

What God starts, He finishes. If you don't give up.

You do your part and God will do His part.