



Title: Growing in Godliness

Date: January 1, 2023

Scripture Text: Philippians 3:12-16

## SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

### Morningside Church

If you have a need or a prayer request, contact the church office.

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Happy New Year! It's hard to believe 2022 is gone and 2023 is here already. As we start a new year, it is a great opportunity to take account of the past year and consider where we are headed in the coming one. As Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ, there is expectation that we will be continually growing spiritually, maturing in our faith and Christian walk. As we take stock of how we are doing at the start of a new year, our spiritual growth should also be considered. Would you consider yourself more spiritually mature than you were a year ago? What can you point to that reflects that growth? Spiritual growth is an intentional effort and requires commitment on our part to do so. In today's message, we look at three steps to growing in godliness.

#### I. Personal Examination (Phil. 3:12)

There are two parts of personal examination: part 1, *salvation* – have you accepted Christ as your personal Lord and Savior? If not, you will never experience all God has for you! Part 2, *sanctification* – growing more and more like Christ. Of all that Paul did, he saw himself coming up short. He compared himself to Christ and saw how he needed to grow. Many times, we compare ourselves to others, not Christ. We may see ourselves worse than others (pity party) or we see ourselves better than others (pride). For proper growth in godliness, we must focus on the right target, Christ.

- List some examples of what Paul did in his Christian walk.
- How does what you've done in your Christian walk compare ([Phil. 4:9](#))?
- What was Paul's attitude toward his need to grow spiritually?
  - How would you describe your attitude?
- Are there times when you compare yourself to others rather than Christ?
  - Why is that such a temptation?
- What can you do daily to help you keep your eye on the right target, Christ?

#### II. Don't Be Controlled by the Past (Phil. 3:13)

Paul states that he was "forgetting what lies behind". This meant that he was not going to let his past distract from his present or determine his future. For him it was all about what lied ahead in his pursuit of growing in godliness. In a similar way, we can't be controlled by our past. We can learn from our past, but we can't let failures or victories from our past distract us from the goal of growing more like Christ.



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- What are ways our past failures can affect our present?
  - Similarly, how can past victories do the same?
- What are examples of learning from our past that helps our present?
- How can focusing on what God has in store for us help us not be controlled by our past and help us grow in godliness?

### III. Pursue the Prize (Phil. 3:14)

Paul was singularly focused, on “the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”. It was by this pursuit he measured his actions and attitudes. Were they aligned and consistent with this upward call? This was the means by which he would grow in godliness. Too often we are not singularly focused but spread wide and thin. As a result, we can’t be effective followers of Jesus and are quickly deterred when challenges arise. We need to find ways to help us stay focused on the prize and not distracted by *all that glitters*.

- What are examples in your life where you may be spread too wide and thin that your growth in godliness is affected?
- How did Paul’s ‘laser focus’ on the prize make him a more effective follower of Christ?
- What one thing can you focus on this year (forgiveness, prayer, consistently reading God’s word, serving, etc.) that will help you grow in godliness?

Put the past out of mind. Set your mind to the future. What [Paul] has reckoned perfect today he ascertains to have been false tomorrow as he reaches for ever better and higher goals. By this gradual advance, never being static but always in progress, he is able to teach us that what we supposed in our human way to be perfect still remains in some ways imperfect. The only perfection is the true righteousness of God.

Jerome, 345-420