



OUR PURSUITS ARE WHAT DRIVE US

We're all in pursuit of something in our lives. We strategize, sacrifice, rearrange our schedules, and whatever else we need to do to pursue our goals. The greater the pursuit's significance to us, the more we'll put into it. Our pursuits are what drive us. Pastor Andrew got into Marine Corp Mud Runs. (If you weren't in church, you missed the pics!) Paul's goal is a pursuit of joy. We've already learned that joy isn't contingent on your situation or what you have. Joy is found in the pursuit. Not in the pursuit of what, but in the pursuit of who.

1. What are some of the things you are actively pursuing right now?
2. Do you have spiritual "goals"? How would you describe them?

GOOD WORKS WITH THE WRONG MOTIVATION REALLY AREN'T THAT GOOD

[Phil 3:8-9] Leading into these verses, Paul has talked about all the things that he's done that might be considered impressive but Paul says he considers all of these things to be a loss because these pursuits were about the wrong things. Being good or nice or accomplished isn't enough. Goodness is not a prerequisite for a relationship with God—perfection is! You can do the right thing with the wrong motivation and it's the wrong thing. Paul goes on to say that all the things he did, he considered them garbage in view of what he gained in Christ. The "whys" of our pursuits matter!

3. Consider your spiritual pursuits. What are your "whys"?

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO IMPRESS GOD BECAUSE JESUS' SACRIFICE ON YOUR BEHALF SATISFIED GOD

This should be the most joyful thing we can know or hear. We can rest and know that we are approved by God. It puts an end to works-based faith. Jesus did the work and bestows upon us His righteousness so our good works are not to impress God but out of our appreciation for and gratitude to God. It is joy to be able to rest in who you are positionally in Christ. It's not something we can achieve, but something that we have received through Christ. This means we don't have to work for approval. The Bible says whatever you do should be done for the glory of God. That is what should impress people.

4. Even if you intellectually realize that Jesus did it all, does the guilt associated with feeling like you need to be "good enough" for God's approval creep into your spiritual pursuits sometimes? If so, why do you think that is?

WE CAN CONFUSE PROXIMITY WITH INTENTIONALITY

[Phil. 3:10] Paul goes on to say that his goal is to know Jesus. His motivation was to pursue Jesus. In our relationship with Jesus, we can confuse proximity with intentionality. Pastor Andrew talked about being intentional about date night with his wife. When they slipped on this, Pastor noticed things off in their relationship. They put a date night on their calendar, realizing that proximity at home wasn't a substitute for the intentionality of this special time together. Similarly, we can be proximal to Jesus by attending church, going to a Bible study, joining Rooted, volunteering in children's ministry, and so on. Those are all good things, but they aren't a substitute for intention.

5. What have you found yourself starting to do intentionally that is in danger of slipping into something less meaningful?

POWER FOR RADICAL TRANSFORMATION

Paul's intentionality to know Jesus is shared in two specific ways: (1) the power of the resurrection and (2) fellowship of His sufferings. The power of the resurrection relates to knowing Jesus in a transformational way, not with a head full of knowledge about Jesus, but in a way that radically affects your life. It's easy to settle for knowledge-based faith by going to one more Bible study. It's good to learn more about Jesus, but when have you plead with Jesus to transform who you are? What if you truly believed that the power of the resurrection is more powerful than anything that captures you or captivates you?

6. What kind of life transformation would you like to seek from Jesus?

EMOTIONAL SUFFERINGS

We try to minimize our experience of suffering, but experiencing Christ-like suffering is not the same as pain, affliction, or general suffering. Paul is not trying to answer the age-old question of why bad things happen which are due to sin entering this world or repercussions of our own actions. What Paul is talking about are the sufferings that were unique to Jesus such as emotional anguish (e.g. for doing the right thing even when it's not received well). We can experience rejection for doing the right thing and we share in the emotional sufferings of Jesus in that. We have a God that not only acknowledges this, but Jesus experienced it. Another of these sufferings of Jesus is temptation. Every time we submit to Christ and don't cave to our flesh, we experience a victorious partnering with Jesus. It's not about us being strong enough, but about being transformed into the image of Christ. Jesus also experienced rejection from his friends in the Garden of Gethsemane and it caused him anguish. Similarly, we experience rejection in our lives. Lastly, like Jesus, we may experience a general sorrow for humanity.

7. How does this perspective of spiritual growing pains help you submit to Christ when you encounter these sufferings?

OUR JOY IS IN PURSUING JESUS AND WHAT HE CONTINUES TO DO IN US

Our joy isn't in suffering or what we can do or accomplish. Our joy is in pursuing Jesus and what He continues to do in us. Jesus is our goal. We can have other goals, like our marriage, job, etc., but our biggest goal should be Jesus. The purpose in life that we're all pursuing is only found in our pursuit of Jesus.

8. What little goal has turned into a big goal that overshadows your pursuit of Jesus?
9. Have you resigned to a willingness to intellectually know more about Jesus rather than continuing to pursue radical and transformational experiences with Jesus?