

# GROWTH GROUPS WEEK 1

WEEK OF JANUARY 15TH

## EXPRESSING HOPE

*THE SPIRIT OF  
THE CHURCH*

### GROWTH GROUP WINTER 2017 – EXPRESSING HOPE WEEK 1 – JANUARY 15, 2017 - PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

#### GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Did you make any New Year's resolutions for 2017? If so, how are they going?

#### SETTING THE CONTEXT

For the next seven weeks we are going to be talking about how the church expresses the hope we have found in Jesus. This week we take a look at a church that the apostle Paul helped found in Philippi. Acts 16 tells the story of how Paul and his traveling companions made their way to Philippi.

In Philippians 3, Paul talks about his life before he came to believe in Jesus and how his life had changed after he believed in Jesus. Paul lets the Philippians know about his own pathway. He shares that none of his previous accomplishments as a faithful and religiously observant Jew had brought him satisfaction or hope. Instead, Paul's hope was found in Jesus Christ.

Paul's goal was to be clothed in Christ's righteousness and not his own. He was going to be intentional about following and serving Jesus. He recognized that God's grace had freed him from trying to do everything he could do to "gain" salvation, and instead gave his life to following the one who had "offered" him salvation.

Paul realized that following Jesus was a process that had to be marked out by intentionality. Resurrection had two phases. First of all, there was a point of conversion when a person received a new spiritual life. But there was also a progressive part of resurrection where a person's moral life was being transformed more and more into the nature of Jesus Christ. And this second part of the resurrection did not happen immediately.

Paul was in the process of achieving this transformed life, but knew that the journey was not quite over yet. So he writes about the way in which he lived his life and the things that he thought about and focused on. He talked about pursuit and pressing forward in following Jesus.

Paul uses the image of a race to make his point. He talks about not looking behind at what has happened, but instead focusing on what is happening and what is to come and to run a race that is pleasing to God.



Paul had been quite successful in his pursuit of obeying the law and being obedient to the teachings of the Old Testament, but once Jesus had taken a hold of his life, he knew he could no longer look back. The heavenward call of grace motivated him to keep serving and keep spreading the message of hope found in Jesus.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read Philippians 3:7-14

*<sup>7</sup> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

- 2) The sermon this week was on the idea of “being intentional.” What did Paul’s pathway of intentionality look like? Based on what you read, what concepts do you think Paul was emphasizing?
- 3) Can you think of a time when you have been intentional in your journey of faith? Maybe in prayer, study, silence, etc...What was that experience or time like?
- 4) Paul says that there is a difference between a righteousness that comes from the law and one that comes through faith in Christ. Why would he say this? What point do you think he is trying to make?
- 5) In verse 10 Paul talks about participating in the suffering of Jesus and experiencing the power of Jesus’ resurrection. What do you think Paul is trying to say? How do these two things go together?
- 6) When it comes to being more intentional in following Jesus why is it important to “forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead?” (see v.13 and 14)
- 7) Paul uses the imagery of a race to try and get his point across. Is that a helpful image? Is there an image that you have found more helpful when you think about your own journey of faith?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Is there a way that you would like to be “more intentional” in your faith in 2017?