

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# One Foot in Front of the Other - Final Stretch

November 23, 2020

If I asked you to list the struggles or difficulties you've faced in 2020, I'm sure the list would be exhausting. In addition to all the regular 2020 "stuff" on my list, my mom had a major health event this fall and has a long journey of healing and restoration ahead of her. Her sister, my aunt, recently suffered an injury that has been a major setback, and the road ahead of her is a mountain of rehabilitation. While chatting on the phone with both of them, the theme that emerged was taking it *one day at a time*. The mountain ahead of each of them is immense. Looking at the entire mountain can be overwhelming. Over the weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder discussed a mountain that he recently climbed and reminded us that focusing on the next step, putting *one foot in front of the other*, is often what it takes to tackle the enormity of what lies ahead.

This same concept applies to us spiritually. Our theme verse for this message series is from 1 Timothy 4:8: **"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come."** The day-to-day fundamental spiritual training in our lives is what strengthens us as we climb the mountains we're facing. The good news is, as we come into this final stretch of 2020 and turn the corner into 2021, the steps that we take now to grow spiritually will give us the strength to endure any new challenges that we encounter.

Taking steps to KNOW Christ a little more every day is the *training* that will result in supernatural endurance.

## **Philippians 3:10-11**

*<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, <sup>11</sup> so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!"*

This week we'll explore this and more as we strive to have "spiritual amnesia," knowing that sometimes we have to let go of our past to grow closer to God. Ben said it this way: "You can spiritually focus when you purposefully forget." In other words, we may need to forget what is behind us so that we can focus on the future God has for us. Over the next few days, we will *put one foot in front of the other* and unpack areas in our lives where we would benefit from spiritual amnesia.

## **Philippians 10:13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: **Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead.** <sup>14</sup> I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us (emphasis added).*

### **Questions:**

Do you have an immense mountain that you're facing? What is the next focused step that will help to get you up and over it?

### **Next Steps:**

Knowing Jesus better each day is what produces endurance and strength. There are many ways to do that. One is to be in the Word through a devotional (like this LivingItOut). Another is to complete a Bible reading plan. (It doesn't have to be Jan. 1 to get started.) The [YouVersion Bible App](#) also has devotionals by topic or book of the Bible and is a convenient tool to grow in your relationship with Christ. Don't forget to check out all the amazing Bible study offerings on RightNow Media. You can learn more about RightNow Media and sign up for your free subscription [here](#).

### **Prayer:**

*God, the mountain before me is immense, and yet, thanks to you, I've miraculously endured. Thank you for the grace and strength that you've given me. May I be disciplined and diligent to continue training for godliness, taking steps to know you more every day. Help me to forget what is behind and look toward what is ahead, trusting you every step of the way. In your precious and faithful name, I pray, amen.*

# Glory of Our Past Success - Final Stretch

November 24, 2020

We all want to make a good impression and show people our best side. For me, this desire often manifests as focusing on my past successes—the achievements and victories that I think represent my finest qualities. After all, that pesky voice of pride likes to whisper that I've done some pretty impressive things. Even if I don't voice these self-satisfied thoughts, they come to mind far too frequently. Essentially, this mentality declares "*my past accomplishments are what define and guide me.*" However, Paul writes some eye-opening words on this very topic.

## **Philippians 3:7**

*I once thought these things were valuable, but I now consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

That impeccable resume Paul once thought valuable ... is worthless. When compared to Christ's display of overwhelming grace and love as he hung on the cross, our promotions, performances, and creations mean nothing. But Paul doesn't stop there.

## **Philippians 3:8-9**

*<sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ<sup>9</sup> and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

Though it's initially shocking to hear our feats called "garbage," this verse reminds us that knowing Jesus is the true treasure. I'm not sure about you, but for me, it's uncomfortable to set aside the (false) glory of my past successes. It feels like taking off the training wheels, and it is unnerving to wobble as we learn to trust who grace says we are—and to whom we belong. Yet, verse 9 reminds us that we *are* free to set aside our accomplishments, because it's our faith in Christ that makes us righteous—not the grueling effort to be impressive.

## **Matthew 6:21**

*Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

When our treasure lies in worldly accomplishments, our hearts reside there. If we reject the flimsy rewards of our own achievements to embrace the identity and direction God gives, we store up treasure in heaven. Notable accomplishments aren't inherently wrong, but it *is* wrong to let them define you.

You are more than your impressive resume, large income, unique ability, or beautiful face. You are worthy because you are a child of God—and that is where you should seek your identity, value, and direction. Purposefully surrendering the value you have placed on your achievements will provide the freedom necessary to grow your faith.

**Questions:**

Do you look to your achievements for your worth and guidance? If so, why?

Which past successes are you hanging on to that should be surrendered to God?

**Next Steps:**

Make a list of the accomplishments that you allow to define or guide you. Then, prayerfully surrender them to God.

**Prayer:**

*Dear Father, thank you for giving your Son so that I could be saved through faith. You have blessed me with skills and talents to accomplish wonderful things for your kingdom, but I confess that I sometimes place too much value in them. Help me look to you alone for my identity and direction. Amen.*

# The Shame of Failure - Final Stretch

November 25, 2020

When I was in high school, I played for the football team during my junior and senior years. We never won a game; rather, we were beaten miserably in most of those games. In fact, during one game, we lost so badly that almost 50 years later the score still stands as the worst defeat in conference history. Sometimes, I still feel the shame of this physical ineptitude and failure. I have been unable to put this in the past and completely forget it. I am ashamed to admit that I have attended games and actually rooted for the record to be broken so I no longer have it hanging over my head. My emotional life would be so much better if I would just put it to rest as something in my past.

This is what God wants us to do with the failures in our past. While my example of a sporting event may be trivial, we all have things we've done that we're not proud of. Our failures may lead us to believe that God may not have a place for us on his "team."

This is not true.

God desires for us to have what Lead Pastor Ben Snyder coined "spiritual amnesia." God not only wants us to forget our past wrongs, but he also wants us to forgive ourselves—as *he forgives us*. This process allows us to move forward and be receptive to what he has in store for us in the future.

Before he met Jesus, Paul's job was to oversee the capture and public execution of Christians. After meeting Jesus, he became the greatest voice for Jesus's saving grace. He could have let the shame of what he had done, stop him from making a difference for God, but he didn't.

## **1 Timothy 1:12-13 (NIV)**

*<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. <sup>13</sup> Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.*

## **Philippians 3: 13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead. <sup>14</sup> I press on to*

*reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

We need to forget the labels that we put on ourselves. The truth is, God knows what you have done, but he is focused on who you can become with him.

Don't let your past define you; instead, define your past as exactly that ... the past.

**Questions:**

What failure(s) might you still be hanging on to?

What is keeping you from exercising spiritual amnesia?

**Next Steps:**

Make a conscious effort to leave behind whatever past discretion is holding you back from true spiritual freedom.

Embrace Paul's example of accepting God's mercy for our failures. Focus on what lies ahead, and apply it to your life.

**Prayer:**

*Father God, thank you for showing us such love and mercy and grace. Help us to realize that you want us to experience the joy of spiritual freedom that can only come from forgetting and letting go of the shame of our past failures and not allowing them to define us. Help us, instead, to focus on what you have in store for us from this point on, embracing the amazing journey that can only come from wholehearted service to you. Amen.*

*This post was written by Ned Miller, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*

# Forgive the Hurts - Final Stretch

November 26, 2020

Last weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder continued our series, *Final Stretch*. His bottom line for the message was, “You can SPIRITUALLY FOCUS when you PURPOSEFULLY FORGET.” Ben gave us three key takeaways on the topic of *spiritual amnesia*. Today, we will unpack the importance of not hanging onto past hurts.

Has someone hurt you? Obviously, this is a rhetorical question. We have all been hurt by someone at some point in our lives, whether it be through something they did or something they neglected to do. The way we handle those hurts determines our ability to move forward in our spiritual growth, and to know more peace.

## Isaiah 43:18 (NIV)

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”*

Living in the past is easy, but it needs to be left behind. Once a hurt is over and done with, although painful, it is only a feeling or a thought. Cease the replaying of what happened and your desire for a different outcome.

How do we stop the backward wishing?

We need to grieve what happened by allowing ourselves to see it and feel it, and then we need to give ourselves permission to move on. There is no need to stay hurt! Forgetting our hurts allows us to shift our focus to what is happening here—right now—where God is at work.

Jesus invited us to forget the hurts so they would not define who we are. When we live in the past, it’s easy to miss the gifts we’ve been given this season. It makes it difficult to see where God may be inviting us to *Know Him, Find Freedom, Discover our Purpose, and Make a Difference*.

## Ephesians 4:31-32

<sup>31</sup> *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.* <sup>32</sup> *Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

We need to experience healing from our hurts, and the Biblical way of healing is through forgiveness.

What is forgiveness? At its very core, forgiveness is giving up all hope for a better past. We cannot change what has already transpired—we can only change how we feel about it. Dr. Wayne Dyer, an author and speaker on self-development and spiritual growth, phrased this process so eloquently: “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

**Questions:**

What hurts are you hanging on to? Are you allowing them to define your life?

Can you see the benefit of spiritual amnesia?

How good would it feel to experience the healing from these hurts?

Where is God inviting you to know him and find freedom from your hurts?

**Next Steps:**

Thoughtfully reflect on the hurts that you’ve healed. Journal about the process that helped you find forgiveness. *Your* past equips you to help others who are hurting. If you encounter someone who is suffering from the same type of hurt, be prepared to offer your redemptive help to them.

**Prayer:**

*Please, dear God, hear my prayers. Grant me the wisdom to know how to forgive those who have hurt me. Show me ways to grieve my hurts so that I may experience the healing of forgiveness. Help me to move my focus from the past to what is here and now. Thank you for sending Jesus to this earth to be a shining example of forgiveness. In his name I pray, amen.*

# Press On - Final Stretch

November 27, 2020

This has been a really rough nine months for most people. I believe God has a purpose for the struggles we endure. I think the most important thing he has taught me during this challenging time is to keep my eyes focused on the prize: GOD! It is so easy for me to get all worked up about everything going on in the world that I become very negative and lose sight of what is most important. Luckily, I have a wonderful mentor who gently steers my focus back to God when I am off track.

## **Philippians 3:14**

*I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

So how do we press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize? We keep our eyes fixed on God. We trust him, *especially* during the difficult times. We remember his love, faithfulness, and mercy.

## **Lamentations 3:22-23**

*<sup>22</sup> The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. <sup>23</sup> Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.*

God is so faithful, and he loves us so much! He has a great plan for our lives. We all need to remember that *the best is yet to come*.

It's important to look for his blessings during the difficult times. I remember driving to work and feeling so overwhelmed by everything going on in our world. I looked up and saw a beautiful double rainbow. It seemed to go on for miles. I smiled and thanked God for his blessing. I praise God that even though I was down, I still was able to notice the beauty he created to bring us pleasure.

I know sometimes it is hard to stay positive. I tend to try to control things when I feel overwhelmed. Lead Pastor Ben Snyder reminded us that we are not responsible for the outcomes, but we are responsible for our contribution to the outcome. In other words, it is not our job to control things, it is our job to control our behavior during difficult times.

Life can be really hard, but it can be beautiful and wondrous too. The best really is yet to come. So, while we complete our journeys here on earth, we need to keep our eyes focused on the prize: God. We, followers of Christ, know how the journey ends ... spending our eternity with our loving Father. And everyone said, "Amen!"

**Questions:**

How do you behave during challenging times? What do you focus on? How do you press on to receive the prize? What are some blessings you have received from God during the last nine months?

**Next Steps:**

Press on—make an effort to shift your focus during trying times to embrace peace, hope, and joy, remembering what God has in store for you. Here are some suggestions: Look up Bible verses about trusting God. Write them on index cards, and meditate on them when you feel yourself losing your peace. Write down three things you are grateful for every day and thank God for them. Journal on the ways God has helped you in the past, and remember them during the tough times.

**Prayer:**

*God, I praise you. The best really is yet to come. Help me to realize how much you love me. Increase my trust in you during the tough times. Help me to lean on you and let you guide me through this journey. Always keep my eyes focused on you, the prize. Please work through me to give hope to others during difficult times. Help me to be positive and radiate your love, hope, and joy. Amen.*

*This post was written by Marsha Raymond, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.*