

Pressing Toward the Goal

Introduction

We are so excited for us to begin this study of the Book of Philippians. It is one of my favorite letters of Paul, and one so rich in theology and personal application. In fact, this letter is considered to be one of the most personal letters Paul wrote and it is filled with personal application to every believer who reads it.

This letter is often referred to as the book of JOY, and we see references to joy and rejoicing throughout the book. We see Paul's joy in the midst of persecution and imprisonment shining through this letter like no other, urging his readers to "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, REJOICE." (Philippians 4:4)

We also see strong application themes of perseverance through trial, having an attitude of humility, being consistent in prayer, and having a thankful heart. One commentator states that if the book were to be summed up in one word, that word would be ENCOURAGEMENT.

This book probably has some of the most often quoted verses in all of the New Testament. Most of the letters in the New Testament have a key verse that seems to be the theme of the over all letter, but the Book of Philippians has so many profoundly stated truths it is impossible to pick out one key verse, or even one key theme. Every commentary you go to seems to have a different key verse or theme that they are highlighting. Most have a list of 7 to 10 verses they consider "key" throughout the book, and it's likely that you will have one or two of your own favorites as we go through our lessons.

For our study, when it came to giving it a title, I chose verse 14 of Philippians, chapter three. I have often referred to this verse as my life verse, along with the two verses preceding it (12 and 13). For me, "**Pressing Toward the Goal**" is what this letter is all about; "...forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

I'm sure as we go through this study you will have your own very personal applications that the Lord will speak to your heart, and it is our prayer that this book of joy and encouragement draws you ever closer in your walk with Jesus through this life.

I have mainly used the New King James translation throughout this study, but we encourage you to look at several different translations as you dig into each lesson.

Doing so will broaden your understanding of the text, giving you a clearer picture and helping you to more accurately apply these truths to your life.

Please have the first lesson completed when you come to the first study. We strongly encourage you to complete your lesson each week. Don't try to do it all in one sitting, but spread it out throughout the week, which will give you more time to glean all that the Lord has for you and to come prepared to share your thoughts in our discussion time.

If for some reason you were not able to complete your study, **we want you to come anyway.** I know that you will receive much from the overview and discussion each week and you can always go back to complete the lesson afterwards.

Take a few moments before you begin your time of study in God's Word to ask Him to quiet your mind from all other distractions and open your heart to the things He wants to show you. Take notes as you read, jotting down those things the Lord impresses on your heart.

We look forward to digging into this letter to the church in Philippi together and to share with each other the insights and encouragements the Lord speaks to our hearts each week.

Shawn & Cathy