

Following Jesus

Forward Strides

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air."

1 Corinthians 9:24-26

"... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, 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, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12c-14

The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.'" They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted. Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

Isaiah 62:11-63:1

Following Jesus sets us on a course of growth and progress, personally, relationally and in community. We make real progress and stride forward with Christ when we determine to live from a place of:

1. lasting love

2. purposeful prayer

3. core conviction

4. mutual mission

5. reaffirmed reverence



CONNECTION QUESTIONS

for personal study & individual reflection,
and small group discussion & comment

“Forward Strides” - 1 Corinthians 9:24-26; Philippians 3:7-16
Isaiah 62:11-63:1; Hebrews 5:7-6:3

1. Paul wrote that there needs to be a purposefulness about our faith and our determination to follow Jesus (1 Cor 9:24-26). We run our course of life with Him “so as to win”, training ourselves to move forward with the ultimate prize in mind. What are the most critical skills on this journey of faith that we need to learn and train up? When you think of a Christian whose walk is strong and whose faith you admire, what are they good at doing? What critical elements of living by faith do we need to develop and grow so as to not end up running aimlessly and boxing at shadows?

2. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would come redeeming “to the ends of the earth”, “striding forward” in strength, “speaking in righteousness, and mighty to save” (Isaiah 62:11-63:1). In Acts 1:8 the risen Jesus promised that those who followed Him would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve His cause “to the ends of the earth”. It is clear that striding forward in great strength with the Lord at the lead is a mission-driven and globally-minded exercise. We share a call to embrace others and God’s purpose for them as well as for us. As we begin to make His

mission and concern for the world our own, we move forward significantly on the path of growing up and accepting responsibility for what we have been given. In trying to keep pace with the Lord, what responsibilities and “witness” is He seeking for you to share? Do you have a sense of call in following Christ to do more than simply receive all that God has done for you in His Son?

3. Philippians 3:12-14 suggests that in order to take hold of what is ahead, we have to let go of what is behind. Why is that so important? How do we go about moving past the past in order to press on toward what is still to come? Why is following Jesus such a forward looking enterprise?

4. Proverb 30:29-31 says that a king and his army are “stately in their stride”. There is a nobility and grace about our following Christ, together we are stately in our stride behind Him. When you think about living with Jesus and following Him honorably, what do you hope that your life includes? What do you want to become more coordinated and graceful in doing in your life with Him? How is that going to happen?
