

## Stripped Away: Dancing to the Right Music

Philippians 3:12-21

### Small Group Discussion Guide

**OPENING QUESTION** (get everyone involved in discussion):

- What type of music, if any, can most get you up dancing? If not, what type of music do you like?
- Someone once said, “Hope is hearing the music of heaven, and choosing to dance to it now.” When you think about heaven, or about the return of Jesus, how do you feel? Excited? If so, what about it are you looking forward to? Nervous or afraid? Elaborate.

**TRANSITION:** We’re continuing our series called “Stripped Away.” We’re looking at the book of Philippians in the NT, to see who we are when the superfluous aspects of our lives are stripped away. If we could boil everything down to the essentials, as followers of Jesus, who are we?

### READ PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

- In v. 12, what is Paul saying that he has not already obtained?
- Would you agree that we haven’t yet arrived at our spiritual “goal”? Is this a frustration, a comfort, or both? Discuss.
- Verse 12 also says that Christ has “taken hold” of us (NIV) or has “made us his own” (ESV).
  - What do you think that means?
  - Per Pastor Josh, one way of looking at it is that we are “engaged” to Jesus. How do you feel knowing that you are in a relationship with Jesus because he pursued you first, wooing you with his love (see also 1John 4:10 and 19)?
  - How does this affect your striving for the goal knowing that you are currently “engaged” to Jesus, that you have been “made his own”?
- Josh says “the prize” or “goal” of this passage that we strive for is the experience of knowing Jesus fully—when we die and enter his presence, and when he returns and makes all things new. One metaphor for this goal is an eternal “wedding feast” with God in the new creation.
  - For those of you who are married, what was it like in the months before the wedding as you looked forward to that day? Exciting? Fun? Work? Anticipatory? Something else?
  - How does it affect your Christian life, your striving for the goal, if you see your efforts as preparing yourself for your future heavenly wedding with Christ?
  - How would it change your outlook if you realized that **our present reality is not our ultimate reality**, that we’re not supposed to be living our best life now? (How might it affect your outlook 1) spiritually, 2) in your vocation, 3) in your relationships, 4) in your hobbies?
  - Pastor Josh claimed that because we’ve not yet arrived at our ultimate reality, we may even feel a sense of homesickness or incompleteness in our relationship with the Lord now. Have you experienced this? How do you deal with it?
- Paul says in verse 16, “let us live up to what we have already attained.”
  - What do you think this means?

- One option is that Paul is thinking of a racing metaphor. Ideally, one never goes backward in a race. What spiritual practices or attitudes can we have to ensure moving toward the goal of a deeper and deeper relationship with Christ?

### READ PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

- In verses 17-19, as we strive towards the goal of heavenly marriage, Paul encourages us to follow good examples and warns us against following bad ones.
  - Let's positively gossip: Who is someone who is a good role model for you of pressing on toward knowing Jesus fully?
  - How do you want to be more like them?
- In verses 20-21, Paul describes a little bit of what that finish line will be like.
  - Paul calls Jesus "Savior." How has Jesus saved you? (too high self-esteem, works orientation, worry, fear, anger, etc.)
  - To what degree are you *eagerly* awaiting Jesus' return? If you're not so eager, what stands in the way?
  - Verse 21 says that the power that enables "the Lord Jesus Christ... to bring everything **under his control**" is the same power he uses to transform us! What is your reaction knowing this kind of power that can transform you spiritually, emotionally, and physically?
  - What is your reaction knowing that you'll receive a new, transformed body "that will be like [Jesus'] glorious body" when Jesus returns?
- Back to verse 15. In view of the fact that our present reality is not our ultimate reality; that on the other side of the finish line is a never-ending wedding that will blow our minds with its greatness; what do we do now?
  - The Greek verb *phroneo* ("take such a view") literally means to **choose a certain mindset** — to choose a certain way of looking at everything. If we fix our thoughts, not only on fully knowing Jesus, but orienting everything in the present around that future consummation, how will that affect our thoughts, actions, time investments, and what we value right now? Mention one area that this perspective might change for you.
- Throughout this passage, Paul mentions some specific dangers that will pull us off-course, and threaten to keep us from reaching the finish line.
  - We are instructed to leave the past behind (v13). For some that may mean forgetting, but for others that means dealing with it (with God or in counseling, etc.). What past hurts or successes do you need to leave behind that are hindering your relationship with Christ?
  - Verse 16 (see also v4) reveals the temptation to fall into a religious system of merit in your relationship with God. How are you tempted to earn your relationship with Christ instead of accepting that he earned "the prize" for you?
  - Another danger that threatens to pull us off course is the tendency to get consumed with our appetites (v18-19). What does it mean that these things can make us "enemies of the cross?" Is there anything in your life that makes it hard for you to "take up your cross?"

### PRAYER:

- Among our prayer requests, let us pray to live our lives currently in view of our future heavenly wedding. And, let us especially pray for those who are discouraged or suffering.