

Looking forwards not back

sermon discussion guide

based on **Philippians 3.12 – 4.1**

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This is part of our series looking at Philippians ("church: family on mission")

Intro: if you had to draw or sculpt or model a pose that summed up the Christian life, what would it be? (eg kneeling in humility before God)

Read Philippians 3.12 – 4.1

Paul uses the picture of the Christian life being like a race. Where do you think you are in the race just now? (eg beginning, middle, end, fallen over, having a drink stop, hit the pain barrier)

v12 'Not that I have already obtained all this' – what is he referring to?

v12 There is deliberate symmetry in 'I press on to *take hold* of that for which Christ Jesus *took hold* of me.' Why is it important to keep both those together?

v13 Paul forgets what is behind (eg his spiritual CV of 3.4-6; his imprisonment and trials), and *strains* towards what is ahead (think of athletes straining for a photo finish).

Dan shared some things that stop us straining forwards: pride of where we've reached spiritually; guilt for our past; shame about ourselves; looking back to the 'good old days'; being emotionally and spiritually 'stuck' at a traumatic event from our past; wishing we had a different set of life circumstances; sin. Do any of those ring true for you? What else would you add that stops us straining forwards?

Dan also shared some things that help us press on towards the goal:

i) choosing good examples to follow (see v17-19). Who do you know who you admire in the Christian life? How are you seeking to copy their maturity?

Who might look up to you in the Christian life? (Don't be unnecessarily humble!) How could you intentionally encourage them to press forwards?

ii) remembering who we are – our citizenship is in heaven (v20). How might that help you press forwards?

iii) remembering where we're heading – the prize (v14) and transformation (v21). How might that help you press forwards?

How does this passage speak to our desire to be a God-dependent, grace-filled, Bible-based, mission-focused, authentic community?

Up (love God): choose a verse from this passage to try memorising. Test each other next week.

In (love each other): How can you help each other strain towards what is ahead rather than looking back?

Out (reach the world): Continue chatting and praying about the mission priorities we've discerned as a church, and what your response will be to them.