



STUDY GUIDE

SERMON TOPIC:

"Ready for Take Off"

WEEK 4

1. READ

Pastor's Selected Scripture: Philippians 3 : 12 – 14 New International Version (NIV)

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, 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, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Further Reading: 1 Kings 17 : 7 – 16 New International Version (NIV)

7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'"

15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.

1 Corinthians 9 : 24 – 27 New International Version (NIV)

24 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. 25 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. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I



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strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

2. REFLECT

[Click the image to view this week's sermon on YouTube!]



As we enter week four of Pastor Watley's sermon series entitled "Forward," we've explored many of the important lessons we must learn as we take our next steps. Although the future is uncertain, we can trust and believe that God has provided us with the insight and the tools we need to walk confidently into our next season. Thankfully, we have the Word of God as a compass and a tool guide on our path *Forward*.

In our lesson for week four entitled "Ready for Take Off," Pastor Watley urges us to remember that God is still doing something new, even in this season. In many ways, our future is not going to look anything like our past. For this reason, Pastor Watley invites us to take a "Tabula Rasa" approach to our lives. The Latin term **Tabula Rasa** means "blank slate/clean slate," and suggests that the human mind is completely clean of knowledge when it is formed. Although some



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scientists and philosophers argue over the accuracy of this belief, this term can be very useful when applied to other areas of our life.

In fact, in our scripture for this week (Philippians 3:12-14), Paul writes a letter to the church at Philippi encouraging them to take a Tabula Rasa approach to their lives as believers. Paul certainly understands the power of a restart, reboot, and reset! Starting in verse 13 he states, “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.” Paul’s words reiterate the fact that in order for us to move forward, we have to adopt an entirely new mindset. We must be intentional to unlearn and release our old expectations and envision a new world with a “clean slate.” However as Pastor Watley reminds us:

We cannot build a new world with the tools of the old one. A new world requires new tools!

In order to envision and build a new world, we must first ask God to provide us with the blueprint. This will require us to take a step back and ask God an important question; “What are you calling me to co-create with you?” When we ask God to provide us with direction, we are often given the tools we need along the way. And yet, even with God’s direction, moving forward is not always easy. As Paul states, “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.” The word “straining,” indicates that moving forward will require us to move out of our comfort zone. It will take all of our effort, energy, and courage to face what is ahead of us.

Thankfully, as Paul teaches us, we are moving forward *towards* something. Paul states, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Even though Paul is writing this letter from a prison cell during one of the approximately seven times he is imprisoned for his faith, he still reminds us to stay focused and run towards the finish line. What is interesting about Paul is that he frequently uses athletic metaphors of running or sprinting to describe his life as a Christian. In 1 Corinthians 9:24 Paul asks, “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.”

Perhaps Paul knows that when you are running a race, you cannot look backwards. I have never seen an Olympic athlete look behind them while running without facing serious consequences. If you’ve ever tried to run, or even walk fast in one direction while your head is facing the opposite direction, you may have experienced some of those consequences too! You are slowed down, you lose sight of what’s in front of you, and sometimes you may even lose your balance and fall. That is why Paul reminds us of the importance of facing forward and pressing towards the goal—the promises of Jesus!



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3. RESPOND

Introspective Questions

- What new thing have you been called to co-create with God?
- What new tools have you been given to envision a new world?

Discussion Questions

- How do you think Paul's time in prison influenced his perspective on moving *Forward*?
- Why do you think Paul uses the phrase, "straining toward what is ahead" when describing moving forward? Do you think this phrase applies to your journey?