

Looking Forward—WOTY 2016

Philippians 3:12-17

Dave Geldart at New Hope Church on January 3, 2016

- **Welcome to NH, Happy New Year**

- Welcome Card
- 1st Wednesdays prayer

S L O O O O O O O O O O O W D O W N !!!

- I love words. Words are cool.

- Like Ben -- We often correct each other's word usage and get excited to learn new words.
 - I've learned that others don't necessarily like this. I learned the hard way that when I would correct my wife's grammar, she usually ended up in tears and we had to have a long "marital growth moment"
 - NOT WORTH IT
- However, I still think words are great! And love language.
- Dictionary Game over Xmas with fam (here are 2:)
 - preconize (PRE-con-eye-z) – To proclaim or commend publicly, often with the appointment of a Pope or Bishop
 - potto – a type of lemur native to West Africa
- Try to Use those words this week!
 - The next time you have to publically commend a small lemur from West Africa, you can simply "Preconize the potto!"

- God loves words too!

- Out of all the ways he could have created the universe, what did he choose?
 - SPEAKING WORDS
- What was the very first homework assignment? – God having Adam come up with words to name all the animals!
- How did God choose reveal himself to humanity?
 - Through his Word
 - Then ultimately through His Word becoming flesh, and making his dwelling among us (what we just celebrated at Christmas!)
- Words are important.

- **Current Mini Series on Words! – about Growth and Goals**

- **WOTYS**
 - Vision (More last wk)
- WOTY Worksheet
 - In your program, and Online
 - Share your WOTY with others, view others via online form
 - WORD cloud with those shared
 - We'd love you to jump in on social media too! Tag your WOTY related posts with #nhwoty2016
 - A FUN way to stay connected with our WOTYS and each other

- Last week, we talked about Looking Back, Today we're talking about Looking Forward

[PRAY]

Philippians 3:12-17 ^{ESV} --- *GIVE CONTEXT for book and Paul -- FREE BIBLES IN BACK*

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Review (in case you missed last week)

What does this passage mean? What lies behind that Paul is forgetting? What is he straining forward to that lies ahead?

Behind:

■ Not “the past”

- Paul is not saying we should forget the past, or move on from what’s happened. He is always telling his own story, and calling other believers to REMEMBER the past to give them hope for the future.

■ **Legalism, religion**, his old way of trying to commend himself to God based on his efforts. His self-improvement, self-salvation project

Ahead – not simply “the future”

- But -- GRACE! New way of relating to God based on the efforts of Jesus Christ on my behalf rather than my own efforts.

What have we attained that we are to hold on to? – Full acceptance by God based on JC’s death and resurrection. Secure identity based not on my works but God’s great mercy and love.

- **Big Idea for this mini-series:** To press on toward the prize we have to process the past and plan for the future while persevering in the present.

Notice one more thing: that even though Paul is fully accepted by God, no longer needing to try to earn God’s favor by his efforts, he still is pressing on – trying – to become perfect. Why would he do this? We’ll look at that this morning! It turns out, it’s a massively important question, with gigantic implications for our own lives.

OK, as we look more deeply into this question, let’s start by looking at something that will torpedo our efforts to PRESS ON and to even think about Setting Goals.

It’s that time of year, where many set goals in what we call “making new year’s resolutions.” -- What’s been your experience with NYRs?

- I’ve observed (both through watching others and from my own experience) a danger associated with NYRs
- **Danger: perfectionism.**
 - The demand that people and things, perform or work out perfectly.
 - There’s a REASON we humans long for perfection.
 - WE WERE MADE FOR IT!!! --- THE GARDEN OF EDEN!
 - We were created to live in a perfect world. Where everything works just right. And were we are in perfect peace with ourselves, creation, others, and God.
 - But as the book of Genesis tells us, once we tried to make things MORE perfect, tried to take matters into our own hands, once SIN entered the World, everything went sideways.

- Now our souls thirst for perfection, but find it nowhere.
 - Side note: those of us who have put our trust in Christ have the promise of perfection regained – in new resurrected life in the new heaven and earth
- Perfectionism comes in two main flavors: BOASTERS AND DEFEATERS
 - Some people use NYRs to boast (to themselves and others) about their successes. Using them to prop themselves up and to give themselves a sense of achievement, self-worth, and confidence.
 - Love Goals
 - For others, NYRs lead them to quit and despair
 - Hate Goals
 - Surely you've seen it: I'm going to go to the gym every day this year. Or, I'm going to lose 5lbs per month.
 - Then, when there's a slipup or failure, miss an evening at the gym or you end up actually gaining a pound in February, then the whole thing gets chucked out the window.
 - These people either wallow in despair, even more convinced that change is hopeless
 - Or they just move on altogether. Forget their goals. And move on to something else.
 - **See that Defeaters too is a side of perfectionism??**
 - IF I can't do it perfectly, I'm going to not do it at all. Perfection is required.
 - Do You tend to be more of a Boaster or Defeater?
 - Where does perfectionism show up in your life?
 - Do you put the pressure of perfectionism on **YOURSELF**?
 - Do you treat yourself as if you need to be basically perfect?
 - Usually overflows into perfectionist expectations of **OTHERS**
 - Do you find yourself frequently disappointed in others?
 - Find it hard to forgive?
 - Often angry?
 - How do you treat your SPOUSE when it comes to performance?
 - Tell story about scrutinizing Jenn (in kitchen) – chopping onions!
 - CHILDREN
 - FRIENDS
 - Coworkers
 - LEADERS
 - Can they fail?

The BAD news this morning is that perfectionism is an ever proximate danger. It's all over our New Year's Resolutions, saturates how we treat ourselves, and how we treat others. **This same kind of thinking has infected the way many of us in the church think about growing spiritually and setting growth goals.**

- I'll say it again: Perfectionism will TORPEDO your ability to set and pursue spiritual growth goals
- So how DO we set goals, press forward toward the prize, and avoid the quicksand of perfectionism?
- GRACE based goal setting
 - What IS grace?
 - Mere kindness and acceptance with no vision for growth or change? Niceness?
 - NOPE
 - GRACE

- God's Riches At Christ's Expense
 - The GOSPEL! – Good News
 - What we could never do for ourselves, God has done for us. And we can step into freedom, forgiveness, and forever life with Him on Jesus' dime, not ours, if we want.
 - Grace fracks its way into the very bedrock of our selves. Down to our identity. And changes everything.
 - Says "You no longer need to try to EARN or ESTABLISH yourself. No longer need to strain and struggle to try to please God. He did it for you, and offers the complete package free of charge (though it cost him an arm and a leg).
 - Grace says "Your identity is secure. Your bedrock firm. You are fully seen, fully known, and also fully loved, accepted, and enjoyed. Your wildest dreams have come true. You're finally safe and free."
 - Grace also says "NOW, now that you're infinitely secure in your identity and in God's love for you, you're freed to try."
 - "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." – Dallas Willard "The Great Omission"
 - So we try Not TO EARN His acceptance, but TO Live out of it."
 - Small, subtle difference on paper – a sermon. LIGHT YEARS of difference in implication and practice.
- HERE, is where Goals come in. Trying. Straining toward. WOTYs. Spiritual growth.
 - Have you ever wondered why we're still here?
 - Why, once you become a Christian, don't you just instantly disappear and join God in heaven?
 - Interesting question, if you're willing to sit with it.
 - There's sure some we don't know, but there's also a lot we do!
 - 1) **Sanctification. We're still here so we can GROW SPIRITUALLY**
 - The process of becoming evermore like Christ. Maturing. Developing. Training.
 - 1 Tim 4:7b-9 ...train yourself for godliness; ⁸for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.⁹The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.
 - There's continuity between who we are now, in this life, and who we'll be in the next, once we're resurrected, freed from sin, and living on the new Earth with Jesus.
 - Our spiritual growth now carries over into our resurrected lives.
 - 2) **Good Works**
 - Scriptures tell us that we're living in a unique era in history where God has prepared GOOD WORKS for us to do
 - Eph 2: 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**
 - And his Spirit is enabling and empowering believers to do those good works. (Book of Acts)
 - A little later in 1st Tim 4: 15 "Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."
 - Goals for the benefit of yourself AND OTHERS!
 - ONE OF THE GOOD WORKS God has us here to do is to reach out to others.
 - BHAGGs are one way we engage in Good Works!
 - BHAGG = Big, Hairy, Audacious, God-sized Goal
 - Different from NYRs --- GOD SIZED

- Not perfectionism!
 - Grace based. God sized.
 - Yet still also requiring work on our end
 - BHAGG
 - SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time Bound)
 -
 - Must include all these to be a good goal
 - Bad Goals: to get better at guitar
 - To be a nicer person
 - To win the entire world to Christ
 - To be less angry
 - Examples of Good ones
 - BHAGG: That guy at work coming to your LG this year
 - If it happens – It’s God!
 - But there are things you do! – press into – GOOD WORKS
 - Prayer
 - Conversation
 - Invitation
 - Friendship pursued outside of work
 - Even the act of working to discover and develop your WOTY and BHAGG is a good work!
- **3) There’s also something (SOMETHING) about rewards**
 - → FOR **BELIEVERS** in heaven based on their good works
 - For those who faithfully endure persecution, Jesus makes it clear, “Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:23).
 - Paul states it plainly, “But each will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Cor 3:8).
 - The author of Hebrews even reminds us that Moses was motivated by rewards, “He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward” (Heb 11:26).
 - *This topic could take another whole sermon of its own, so we’ll leave it there for now. Can ask more in QA if you want.*
 - Christians don’t often talk about rewards. Makes them nervous. We’re afraid to talk about rewards because of the influence of perfectionism.

So, in summary, we’re still here, at least in part, because:

- 1) We are being sanctified, training, becoming now who we will be.
- 2) God has prepared Good works for us to do
- 3) God will reward believers in heaven based on these labors

- That’s the good news about Grace, Goals, and Growth:
 - This life is NOT a throw away!!! – Our lives now Matter!!!
 - We ARE training, becoming, growing. This time IS important. For you. For me. Today. Tomorrow. Training days.
 - How are YOU using your training days?
- But where’s the GRACE? I thought this was supposed to be light and fun and good? Aren’t works and rewards what we’re trying to get away from. This sounds like a lot of pressure.
 - Remember, works that try to EARN salvation = bad
 - But works done out of a response to secure salvation, works trying to earn Rewards are very biblical!

- Correctly understood, this is actually really exciting stuff! Once I really swallow and digest the notion that my life, my choices today really matter, that my spiritual growth right now MATTERS, then all of the sudden I surge with new energy. New purpose. New excitement and hope. This is important! I can set goals!
 - o My pain is NOT wasted. I won't regret this hard work! Not only will God use it for good for others. But He's using it NOW for good for ME, Good that will be useful on into eternity! I'm becoming NOW who I'll be forever.
- That means my thoughts matter. My efforts in controlling my thoughts and setting my mind on what is Good matters! Every time I do a little mental battle to resist the urge to lust, envy, hate, or be proud – IT MATTERS!
- Every time I fight back against the voice in my head telling me I'm worthless, hopeless, useless, and generally unloved – every time I choose to speak to my own soul and speak what is true against what is a lie – even as I am so, so tired, and am sometimes 49% convinced the words of darkness communicate reality – THESE LITTLE UNSEEN EFFORTS MATTER!
- Every time you choose to come back to my spouse with a 2nd response – maybe an apology, words of sympathy, or humility -- It Matters!
- Every time I remember to hug my kids, look into their eyes, spend time playing with them, get down on their level, and tell them I love them no matter what – even when they've just pushed their brother into a wall for the 3rd time in a row, and they lied about it even though you watched it happen, and your blood is boiling because they can't seem to learn to be good, and obey me, and I'm already 10 minutes late for my next thing, and they just got out of time out for the 4th time in 15 minutes – THESE MOMENTS MATTER! (both for them AND for me!)
- When your friend hurts you, or lets you down and you struggle to choose to forgive them – THESE EFFORTS MATTER!

You're becoming who you'll be.
 It's not meaningless. It matters.
 Our Father sees, He's proud, and will reward.

Grace tells us that this story is true.

We're freed to try. Because we already have God's acceptance. Freed to set goals and try to cooperate with God in his sanctification program tailored especially for me. **Freed to try and FAIL.** To stare my sinfulness and my failures in the face and not flinch. Not be overcome by guilt or despair. Because I'm still safe. Still secure. Still loved. Still known. STILL COVERED IN GRACE.

Freed to learn from my failures. To see them as valuable lessons, valuable growth opportunities – often times more powerful and transformative than our successes.

Freed to become who I'll be.
 It's not meaningless. It matters.

So as you consider your own life this morning, your own sanctification program, your own strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, WOTYs, BHAGGs.... What do you see? What's something you sense God might want you to focus on this coming year in order to become more like Him? To become who you'll be.

My WOTY 2015-2016 Story

Peace (anxiety) Self Care...

-- still looking for focus passage and resource/book for Self-Care if some have suggestions!

What about you?

Maybe you know right away:

You're anxious. It's gotten worse this year. You are frantic, afraid, and so terribly tired. You know your WOTY 2016 should be rest, peace, slowing...

Or maybe your marriage is struggling. Home is full of elephants in each room. You know your WOTY needs to be patience, cultivate, family, love, forgiveness, hope.

Maybe you're climbing the corporate ladder with ease. You work a lot. You're successful. Respected. Increasingly wealthy (though of course you're not rich like those other people). Your word needs to be something like: humility, dependence, trust, generosity, gratitude, priorities

Maybe you stay at home with the kids, and you feel stuck, exhausted, overwhelmed, depressed, resentful, angry, unappreciated
Maybe your word should be: rest, contentment, hope, sacrificial love, nurture, self-care, dependence, identity

Maybe you're trying to live a life of ministry to others. You're sharing your faith. Engaging in Discipleship. Leading a LIFE Group! And you're tired. You're discouraged from pouring yourself into others, some of whom end up walking away as if nothing ever happened. Your sacrificial love seems fruitless. Efforts seem wasted.
Maybe your word should be: perseverance, gratitude, hope, engage, perspective, courage

Or maybe you DON'T know right away.

Like Ben said last week, that's ok. But engage with it. Here are some ideas to get you started (on screen). Spend actual time in prayer, asking God what He's doing, wanting to do with you. What your WOTY should be. Spend time talking to those closest to you, asking for their input. If you really free them up to give you honest feedback, and if you're willing to take the risk, you'll probably gain some really insightful and valuable ideas. If you're married, ASK YOUR SPOUSE! And really consider what they say. If you're not married, ask your friends, those in your LIFE Group, your LG Leader, your family members.

Remember, GRACE abounds! We press forward, and strain ahead, we set Goals, Do WOTYS, we TRY....
Because we're safe, secure, loved, known, and because we're by Grace becoming who we'll be. Our lives matter. Our tries matter.

So lean in this year. Press On toward growth and good works. Keep eternity in view. Prayerfully consider and settle on a WOTY, maybe even a BHAGG. Have fun with it! Let it saturate your SocMed, your art, your legos (ask Chris Jenson!), your reading, your movies, conversations.

Remember, Paul in our focus passage ends by encouraging the Philippians to imitate him and the example of their leaders. And again in 1st Timothy: It's so good for everyone when others can see us grow. It can be such an encouragement to us (and others!) We're supposed to do this Together!

Share your WOTY with your family, friends, LG – not to BOAST, but for mutual encouragement! Share with the church via our online form and get in our Word Cloud! Get prayed for and encouraged. Pray for and encourage others. (USE WOTYs List to pray for others--- wanna grow in prayer?)

Lets do this together!

WOTYs and BHAGs can be helpful for groups too! Maybe your LG should pray through what your Group's WOTY and BHAGG for 2016 should be. It's been great for our group historically.
Perhaps a WOTY and BHAGG could be helpful for your family to rally around this year.
Maybe even our church as a whole. What would our corporate WOTY and BHAGG be? Perhaps something the elders and the rest of us could be praying about together.

Ephesians 4: 13-16 Paul, speaking of the CHURCH, reminds them their BHAGG (and ours) is that--

...we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Amen Lord Jesus.

Let it be! For NH in 2016, Let it Be!

QA Testimonies

WOTY 2015 Reflections – stories

WOTY 2016 Thoughts, rationales

Questions, Other Testimonies

(Invite up ushers and band)

[Pray]

– Offering