

LifeWay Family Bible Series for June 19: Strive daily to become more like Christ_61305

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Strive daily to become more like Christ

- Philippians 2:12-18

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What are you doing these days to help grow your faith in Christ? Is sitting on the couch and watching television helping the kingdom of God? Is checking the mail the highlight of your day? Is living your life as though nothing has changed in the last 10 years purposeful anymore? In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippian church, he gives some encouragement to those needing a nudge to get growing.

Philippians 2:1-11

In one of the most beautiful passages within the New Testament, Paul eloquently describes the essence of Jesus Christ. He encourages the Philippian Christians with the inspiring words, "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ." Then, he launches into the best description of Jesus'

essence and sense of purpose ever penned.

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Paul speaks of Jesus' incredible humility, even the humiliating way he died upon the cross. Because of Jesus' great resolve and willingness to obey God, the Father lifted up the Son for everyone to worship. Jesus' name would be confessed as Lord, to the glory of God.

Understanding that believers are called to seek after the mind of Christ offers a starting point for us to begin moving toward growth. Any step toward growth must begin with the standard of measured success. For Paul, there was nothing more acceptable than striving to be like the Lord. From the very first step toward spiritual growth, the Christian should be striving toward growing more like Christ.

Philippians 2:12-13

On the heels of this most excellent description of Jesus, Paul encourages his readers with a challenge of his own. The relationship between Paul and the Christians at Philippi was a very familiar one. The Philippians had a special place in the heart of the apostle. They had welcomed him during his visit there, obeying his commands and following his teachings. Now, even though separated, the Philippians still were obeying Paul's teachings.

He instructs them to "work out their own salvation." On the surface, this

phrase seems somewhat problematic when trying to understand salvation comes through no human works. However, after a careful examination of the phrase, a thought provoking explanation sheds light on the purpose of our existence as a Christian.

The Greek phrase katergazesthe means “to work out.” The true thought behind the word means to work out in the field or mine. In other words, Paul was encouraging his readers not to figure out their salvation, but to exercise their salvation in their lives. Coming directly after his words about the way Jesus lived and died, this concept offers us a purpose for living out our faith.

Paul recognizes the daunting task he is asking the Philippians to do. He says they are to work out their salvation with “fear and trembling.” Within those two words lies the great paradox for Christians. Living with the mind of Christ means living in humility, striving for justice and distributing compassion. The way of Jesus leads through the narrow gate, takes us down the unpopular way and places us on the road towards Golgotha. Living like Jesus is a choice made with fearful hearts and trembling hands.

Yet in everything we do and say, we do it for the good pleasure of his work. As difficult and hard as the road was that Jesus trod, in the end, it brought about peace and joy for humanity. As followers of Christ, we are called to grow toward him. Just as a plant grows toward the sunlight, the Christian should grow toward the Son of God.

Discussion questions

- What difference are you making for the kingdom of God right now?
- How are you becoming more like Christ?

- How can you grow toward Christ in your life?

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