

Philippians 3:12-14

Churches, like organizations, go through phases some have called life cycles. Early on, someone or some group of people dream about planting a church. Those people begin laying down foundational beliefs, setting goals and establishing some structure for the organization. Growth is rapid, typically, during these phases. Then, after the excitement of the earlier phases, most organizations begin a time called a maintenance phase. It's during this time that the vision/mission can be easily lost by emphasizing buildings and programs. Not emphasizing the vision/mission will lead the organization into nostalgia, questioning, polarization and even death.

In this way, churches can mirror the life cycle of a business. It's vital that churches dream the dream again and avoid the right side of the life cycle. You might think it seems hard, even impossible but all it takes is ONE person, ONE couple, ONE group for the LORD GOD to use to reinvigorate, reignite a gospel flame. Let's look, today, at what Paul had to say.

I. The Consideration of the Problem vs 12-13a

Paul didn't see himself as having reached perfection. It was this _____ that drove him. Paul saw this need in his life to be like Jesus Christ. Jim Collins

wrote _____ in 2001. One quote I really like is Good is the _____ of Great. We don't have _____ churches because we have _____ churches.

Paul considered and concluded he still had a problem, he had not yet grasped completely why Jesus had arrested him. That led to....

II. The Concealment of the Past vs 13b

Notice what Paul states: This _____ thing I do. He saw two actions as comprising ONE thing. Whether it was his good deeds, his lineage, or his training, he determined to _____ those things behind. It's vital that we, as human beings, have the ability to let go of things. We must not allow the past (whether good or bad) keep us from seeing ahead.

III. The Concentration of the Pursuit 13 a, c

The second component of this ONE thing Paul did was _____ forward. While Paul is mentally forgetting the past, he is intentionally reaching forward. The thought here is that the runner understands the finish line is nearing and it will take every ounce of energy. In fact, the Greek word here implies _____ every _____ to its

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maximum output, stretching, leaning forward into crossing the finish line.

What is your _____ thing? What is that _____ concentrated pursuit of our life? I fear most of us have spiritual _____. Churches has the same issues, especially those who are stuck in a maintenance phase of existence. The single most important thing a church does is _____.

What is your _____ thing? What captivates your attention? What is your intensity level in your pursuit of the gospel?

IV. The Completion of the Prize vs 14

Knowing his intensity level is at maximum output, Paul, nonetheless, _____ on. His eyes are fixed, he is bearing down on the goal, the prize that keeps him motivated. He realizes the source of this call is from the High King of Heaven, rooted in Christ.

I believe we have our sights set _____ . Some folks think having/setting goals only leads to unrealized expectations and disappointment. That would be true if the race if about _____.

Remember, the race we've been called is, actually, already over. The Great Runner finished the course on our behalf.

As a believer and a runner, our first responsibility is to _____ in Him. Secondly, our responsibility is to run our own race in such a way that others see Jesus in the way we run.

My fear for individuals and churches alike is that we're prone to forget or de-emphasize the very things that Jesus has called us to remember.

Who's your ONE?

Remember our challenge to evangelize corporately.

Remember our challenge to evangelize personally.

Remember our challenge to evangelize our ONE.

Remember our challenge to invite ONE unchurch person to a worship service.