

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Build My Life, I Will Run

WELCOME

How well-prepared were you and your family for the COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide lockdowns as a result of it? What would you do differently in the “new normal” world that will better equip you and your loved ones for future possible scenarios such as this pandemic?

WORD

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-15, 20-21

¹²Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

People ask about the signs of the end times because of the COVID 19 pandemic today. It seems that we have been asking the same thing for centuries! Jesus responded to such questions (**Matthew 24:1-44**), and He gave examples of these signs---false christs or false prophets, wars and rumors of wars, increase in lawlessness, earthquakes, pestilence, plagues, and tribulation. Jesus warned his disciples that things are certainly going to happen before His Second Coming.

You may respond in either FAITH or FEAR to what is going on today: to respond in fear is to despair, give up hope, and be passive. To respond in faith is to take this opportunity and realize God will accomplish His purpose and He can make something good out of this. Let us learn to respond in faith as we face this crisis. This pandemic has brought to light the inescapable vulnerability of human life--the inevitability of death. But for believers in Christ, there are two possibilities in how we will experience this inevitability: either He welcomes us into heaven, or we welcome Him on earth upon His return! **Matthew 24:44** is a clear call from JESUS: **WE SHOULD BE READY FOR THE INEVITABLE.**

1. PRESS ON

The Apostle Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:13-14** that he is not yet what he should become. He is not yet there, but he is becoming. The principle here is GROWING. Peter in his epistle also wrote about the call to be “on guard” and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**2 Peter 3:18**). As Christians, we have to keep growing. The danger is when we think we don’t need to grow anymore, and we stagnate and deteriorate! How many of you are taking this principle seriously? We cannot live on the past grace we received at salvation, or past knowledge of who Jesus is. God wants us to keep growing for as long as we live on earth.

Many Christians stop growing because they become proud. To press on, we need to embrace humility. Do you know which areas you need to grow in? Humility will allow you to listen to feedback from others in this area. The past can cripple us and guilt from past wrongdoings is a heavy burden to carry in life. Many of us are prisoners of the past but when we give our lives to Jesus, we are set free from the clutches of guilt. When you press on, be willing to let go of the past!

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, *“The great thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in **what direction we are moving**. To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it – but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”* Are you pursuing God’s direction for you?

2. PRIORITIZE

To prioritize is to focus on what is most important. Take note of Paul’s “**one thing**” in **v13-14**: “forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” Paul used athletic terms---it’s all about straining and doing his best to meet his goal. What is your PRIORITY? Are you focusing on what ultimately matters? Our priority should be like Paul’s and in **vv.15-16**, he talks about the word **PERFECT (Gk. TELEOS)** to describe our growth to full maturity. What attitude did he emphasize? The attitude of pressing on and prioritizing. Maturity means that you know your shortcomings and imperfections, but you continue to grow and mature in the faith. This means you get rid of even the “respectable” sins, or the hidden sins of the heart. In **v14** Paul mentions the “upward call of God” – and that is our priority – to be all that He wants us to be. You start from your BEING, and then move towards DOING.

WORD (cont'd)

When you prioritize, **you begin to have a standard** by which you live by. The priority of the Christian life is best summarized by modelling it – to be an example for others on how to follow Jesus. To impact lives, you must model the standard of Christ. This was why Paul set himself as an example for others as he followed the example of Christ. Copy people who follow Jesus!

Paul warns the Philippians in **v19** about wrong models – those who prioritize is their own appetite, who glory in their shame, and who set their minds on earthly things! He wasn't even talking about unchurched people, but churchgoers who claim to follow Christ, and yet do not live with Jesus as their priority at all. These are the enemies of the cross of Christ (**1 Cor. 6:9-10**)– who take the grace of Christ as a license to sin. Your priority is to please God, to live in accordance to His ways always. For the Apostle Paul, it was very clear – He pursued God's calling and prioritized it.

Are you a model of pursuing God and Christlikeness at home and outside your home (social networks, etc.)? This lockdown period is a time to strengthen relationships and model Christlikeness. People are watching you – but are you are a good a bad model of following Jesus? Paul said, “imitate me as I imitate Christ” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). Holy living is not an option for God's children. It is required of us so prioritize a life that is pleases God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

- 1. Self-Check.** How are you getting ready not just for the battle against COVID19, but more importantly, for the second coming of Jesus?
- 2. Setting It Right.** What attitudes and behavior would you need to change as you prioritize God's calling for your life (maturity, growing in Christlikeness)?
- 3. Living It Out.** Many people are living in fear. How has this message given you hope in the midst of the pandemic? How can you reflect that hope to others who find it hard or even impossible to respond in faith in our situation today?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Let us continue to pray for people in our homes and around the world to recognize their need for Jesus in this time of the pandemic. Mobilize your family, Dgroup and friends to do something that show how much God cares for the suffering and the needy. Share the ultimate hope that we have in Christ – eternal life for those who put their trust in Him as their only Savior!

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Wisdom, protection and saving faith for the frontliners and government leaders
- Nations around the world to recognize God as the only one who can end this pandemic

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends

3. PERSEVERE

In **verse 20**, Paul reminds the Philippians that their “**citizenship is in heaven**”, and this was also what they “**eagerly wait**” for. Today, we often forget that we do not belong in this world! We put so much effort having a good life on earth, but we forget to invest in eternity. Paul encourages his readers to look forward to the glorious future that await them – a future of immortality (**Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Cor. 15:51,53**). So set your hearts on Jesus Christ, and on His inevitable return.

PERSEVERE and wait hopefully and endure with strength and joy. His coming is sure and we must be ready for this inevitable truth: we will all see Jesus one day (**Romans 8:25**). When you wait eagerly for this, you will avoid sinning or “playing around” God's laws! You will give your best to please the coming King. Persevere expectantly – have hope as you live in the light of His second coming (**1 John 3:2-3**)! **1 Corinthians 15:54-58** is a hopeful promise –that Christ has overcome the inevitable (death)! It no longer holds power over believers. Let us then respond in FAITH, not FEAR, and let us be “*steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord*” all the days of our lives.