

Questions for Looking Forward

- Do you ever look to set a direction for a new year? If so, how do you determine what you would like to focus on?
- Why would the Apostle Paul, of all people say that he has not attained knowing Christ?
 - How do you feel when you hear that Paul has not attaining knowing Christ? Encouraged? Defeated? Something else?
- Paul desired to share in Christ's suffering. Pastor Keith equated that with a loving marriage, that, while no one wishes for suffering, we are willing to go through suffering because we love that person so much.
 - Honest question: Do you love Christ like that - so much that you are willing to suffer for Him?
 - Keep in mind that Paul says he has not attained this kind of love yet. Yet Paul's life speaks otherwise. Paul is displaying a "holy discontent" with where he is at with Christ. Are you discontent with where you are with Jesus? Does it drive you forward to learn and grow deeper into Him?
- This holy discontent pushes Paul forward to the goal that Christ called him for. What has Christ called you to?
 - Do you feel like you are growing in Christ when it happens or do you look back and realize how much you have grown over time?
- What goals would you like to set for yourself for the coming year for your relationship with Christ?
 - In other words, what areas do you feel a holy discontent?
 - Are you willing to go public with those areas and confide in this group, or specific members of this group to help keep you on task?
- The first goal Pastor Keith mentioned for the church was increasing our obedience to God's Word. He gave several examples of areas that we as humans seem to like to hold onto: romantic relationships, control of our marriage, finances, our kids, workaholism, our schedules.
 - Do you see yourself in one of those areas that God might be speaking to you about?
 - Is there another area that Pastor Keith did not mention that might need some work, effort and focus?
- The second goal Pastor Keith mentioned for the church was being about the mission of God. What areas do we as a church excel in this regard? What areas can we improve?
 - How do we move from speaking of improvement to making it a reality?
- The final goal Pastor Keith mentioned for the church is learning to speak with friends and family about Christ (evangelism). Does this goal scare you at all? Why or why not?
 - Do you feel equipped to share Christ with someone? Do you know enough?

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- What would you need to feel confident in sharing Christ with someone?
- Turn to Colossians 4:2-6
 - The first three verses are about prayer, the last two are about evangelism.
 - Can you pick out the three ways to pray for our evangelistic efforts?
ANSWER: Pray for opportunity (“pray for us...that God may open a door for our message”); Pray that we make the most of the opportunity (“so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ”); and Pray that we say it clearly (“Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”)
- Next, what instructions does Paul give us about sharing the message in verses 5-6?
 - “Be wise in the way you treat outsiders”
 - “Make the most of every opportunity” (NOTICE it does not say make every opportunity - what is the difference?)
 - “Let your conversation be filled with grace”
 - BUT “Seasoned with salt” (How does that fit with filled with grace?
HINT: think of the uses for salt back in Bible times)
- Let’s commit to pray now for specific people that God would like us to talk to, as well praying for opportunities, making the most of them, and sharing it clearly.