

Stop Trying So Hard: Finding Peace, Purpose, and Rest in Jesus

Part 4: You'll Never Be Perfect... and that's OK.

Philippians 3:12-20

Summary: Stop exhausting yourself trying to be perfect. Discover how pursuing Jesus brings true peace, purpose, and rest.

Main Ideas:

A healthy life grows.

The pursuit of perfection is an empty cycle of dissatisfaction.

God created us to enjoy a growing relationship with him now and forever.

True life isn't found in perfection. It's found in enjoying God's love.

The goal isn't perfection. It's growth.

The more we know, love, and enjoy God the more we want to know, love, and enjoy him.

God isn't asking for perfection, just pursuit.

An eternal perspective changes how we see life now.

We find true life when we stop chasing perfection and start pursuing Jesus.

Invitation:

Read Psalm 63:1-8

Ask God: "How can I enjoy you more today?"

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you relate to the pressure of chasing a "perfect life"? What areas of your life have you felt the most pressure (career, family, appearance, faith, etc.)?
2. What do you think the difference is between a healthy desire for growth and an obsessive chase for perfection?
3. Read Psalm 63:1-8. How does this passage describe a deep enjoyment of God? What words or phrases stand out to you?
4. What are some practical ways you can "enjoy God" more in your daily life?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

ME: I'm about to save you a bunch of money.

We all want to improve... we want to become better versions of ourselves.

How do I know?

- The self-help industry made about \$16 billion in the US in 2023.

Why? B/c we feel the pressure to get our lives together.

- We spend so much time, money, and energy trying to "fix" ourselves.

We're told to get the next book, listen to this podcast, follow this influencer, or try the next life hack so we'll finally get "it" right.

But what if real transformation doesn't come from self-help, but from something far better... something that won't cost you thousands?

WE: Nothing wrong w/ the desire to grow... A healthy life grows.

- Healthy kids/plants/relationships grow

But often this natural and healthy desire to grow is twisted into an obsessive chase for perfection.

We're told to find the perfect job, perfect family, perfect body, perfect life—then we'll be satisfied.

We see others and think they've found it... they figured it out!

- But the truth is they're comparing themselves to everyone else too!
- There's never enough, there's always more to have, more to do, more to fix!
- The pursuit of perfection is an empty cycle of dissatisfaction.

But we keep trying... "It hasn't worked for anyone else... But it just might work for us."

So we exhaust ourselves trying to make perfect lives in an imperfect world...

OR... we give up on it all. Just coast through life... "this is just how I am this is just my life I just need to get through it."

- Deep down we still hope things change, but never do anything to make it happen.
- Stop growing all together and die inside little by little.

And we don't just chase perfection in life... we do it in our faith too.

- We think if we just pray more, learn more, and try harder we'll finally feel right with God.
- But deep down we still feel like we're not doing enough.

Or just give up and coast... "Jesus loves me so I'm good. I said a prayer I'm done."

- We never grow.
- Life gets difficult and the whole thing falls apart.

But that's so far from the point of life... God created us to enjoy a growing relationship with him now and forever.

We don't have to choose between the exhausting pursuit of perfection or the empty routine of just getting through life.

There's a better way—and someone who discovered it was the Apostle Paul... and he said if we can figure this out it'll change every aspect of our lives.

Paul started life obsessed with perfection. With getting his faith "right."

- He followed every rule hoping it would earn him God's approval.
- Until he met Jesus

He describes this transformation in a letter to the JFs in ancient Philippi...

Phil. 3:7-9a *I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him.*

Paul spent years chasing religious perfection. But then he met Jesus and everything changed.

He realized true life isn't found in perfection. It's found in enjoying God's love.

In the same letter, he explains how this played out for him...

GOD: Phil 3:12-14 *I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

What are "these things" he hasn't achieved? What is the heavenly prize he is hoping to reach?

- Hint: It's not going to heaven when he dies.
- It's not a reward for having the most bible verses memorized or the most time spent in church.
- It's not having the perfect life or being the perfect Christian.

It's what he said before... Knowing Jesus. Being one with him.

- A deeper and deeper enjoyment of God and his love.

And the Apostle Paul himself says... "I have not reached perfection in this yet."

- And that is ok... b/c the goal isn't perfection. It's growth.

He says, "I press on to possess that which Jesus first possessed me."

- In other words, he's not chasing perfection. He's chasing Jesus, b/c Jesus has already chased after him.

"Press on"... an active and earnest hunting, pursuing, chasing after...

He is continually pursuing a deeper relationship with God and enjoyment of God that Jesus came to give all of us.

And in this pursuit, he's not looking back on his past religious achievements or his failures... He's focusing ahead to when he will even better know, enjoy, and experience God in eternity.

It's this idea of continual growth.

Think of a close relationship... friend or spouse

- The goal isn't to memorize facts about the person so you can have the "perfect relationship"
- You don't spend time with them so you can "get it right."

- The goal is to enjoy them more and more.

It is the same with God... but better.

He is the source of true love... He is love.

- And since he is infinite there is always more to discover and enjoy
- And **the more we know, love, and enjoy God the more we want to know, love, and enjoy him**

As **Gregory of Nyssa** said around 375 AD:

- *The one who loves God never reaches a point where he says, 'I have enough.' Instead, he is drawn continually higher, into eternally increasing joy.*
- *When the soul runs toward God, it does not find an end to its race. The more the soul runs, the greater the distance it discovers, and yet the more joy it has in the pursuit.*

The life Jesus offers isn't about achieving some final level of perfect spirituality...

- It's about experiencing God and his love more and more for eternity.

That's why Paul says he presses on/continually pursues this relationship...

Not trying so hard doesn't mean not doing anything... it's not trying... it's pursuing God.

- It's like playing tag, or chasing your kid
- It's not a chore... it's a pursuit that brings happiness.

Me- the first time I learned a song on guitar (grand old flag)

- Couldn't believe I had made real music
- Couldn't get enough
- So I practiced for hours and hours and hours.
- Not b/c I had to or b/c I was trying to be perfect... but b/c I wanted to
- I enjoyed it and wanted to be able to make more and more music.
- Were there better guitar players around me... of course.
- And still, Luke can play circles around me... but I don't care if I'm perfect. I enjoy the process of progress.

That's the life we are invited into... **God isn't asking for perfection, just pursuit.**

This sounds simple... and it is... But there is a problem...

Paul knew then just as we see now... we are constantly being offered fake happiness solutions.

Look at what he says next...

Phil. 3:17-19 *Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ. They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.*

It's like humans never change... the same things the Philippians were being told would give them the perfect life are the same things held up as the answer for us...

Their god is their appetite: We're told if we can just satisfy our desires, get the things we want...

- If we can somehow get more money, stuff, sex, experiences then we'll find perfection
- But the thing with appetites is they are never satisfied... they just grow and grow.
- Always empty and hungry
- How much is enough? Just a little more.

Bragging about shameful things: We're told if we just get ahead, dominate, succeed at all costs... then we'll find the perfect life...

- But that only brings fear of losing, paranoia, turns others into enemies.

Think only of life on this earth: "If I could just change my circumstances I'd find perfection, if I do what makes me happy now then I'll be perfectly happy forever. This is all there is so I better look out for ol' #1."

With all of these promises, my question is... How has that been working for you?

- These promises don't deliver.
- They only make things worse.
- Hurt you and others around you

Paul says we don't have to fall for those lies.

We don't have to be slaves to our appetites and only worried about trying to be happy and have a perfect life here and now...

Phil 3:20 *But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.*

We aren't made to pursue perfection... we're made to be citizens of heaven now and forever

And when we can get that perspective everything changes...

An eternal perspective changes how we see life now.

We weren't made to chase perfection in this world—but that doesn't mean our lives here don't matter.

JF's are already citizens of heaven, and that reality should reshape how we live right now.

When we understand that our ultimate home is w/ Jesus, it changes our priorities.

- We still seek to live with purpose, to love and serve others, but we do it with a greater perspective—knowing that this world is not all there is.

If you're visiting a foreign country. You care for the people around you, you contribute where you can, you make the most of your time there...

- But you don't attach your entire identity to that place.
- You know your true home is elsewhere.

In the same way, our citizenship in heaven means we don't get consumed by the endless pursuit of earthly perfection.

- We don't live for temporary success, material comfort, or human approval—
- But we do invest in what really matters: loving God, loving people, and living in and for the KOG here and now.

Because heaven isn't just a future hope—it's a present reality shaping the way we live today.

And we are invited to bring that perspective, that relationship, that citizenship to earth now... to show the rest of humanity what is to come home and how they can experience it now and forever.

We don't have to work for perfection... b/c we know this isn't all there is. This isn't our one chance to figure it out.

- There is so much, infinitely more to come.

We recognize the hollow lies of success, wealth, power, and fleeting desires.

When we give up striving for perfection we can stop trying to have it all figured out

- And enjoy the journey of growing our relationship in Jesus

When it's not about perfection we read the bible not to figure out God... but to enjoy him.

- Understand his story, how he interacted with people, discover his heart.

We are part of a local church community... Not to check off a box, fill our heads with more deep knowledge...

- But to learn how others enjoy God and encourage each other to keep looking ahead.

Jesus doesn't ask us to be perfect, but to pursue him... and that pursuit leads to the life we are all looking for.

Life wasn't meant to be exhausting and empty... Jesus said he came to give us life to the full.

- And no matter what we've been promised, this full life can only be found by enjoying God.
- It's the invitation Jesus offers all of us.

Perfection is a myth, but peace is real.

- God isn't waiting for you to arrive—He's inviting you to walk with Him today and every day
- The more we truly know Jesus, the more joy, freedom, and purpose we'll experience.

We can stop exhausting ourselves chasing things that will never satisfy.

- The best life isn't found in perfection... it's found in pursuing Jesus.

YOU: This week let's stop trying to find perfection and practice just enjoying God.

Read Psalm 63:1-8

O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory. Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you! I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in

prayer. You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. Because you are my helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your strong right hand holds me securely.

And every morning Ask God: "How can I enjoy you more today?"

- And then be looking for what he shows you.

WE: We don't have to be perfect.

Life isn't a math problem that we can figure the right answer to and then everything will be great.

We don't find the life we are looking for by "fixing ourselves."

- We find it in Jesus.
- The more we know him, the more we'll discover a love that keeps growing for eternity.
- That's the life we are invited into.

We find true life when we stop chasing perfection and start pursuing Jesus.