

When Yogi Berra (**picture**) was a catcher for the New York Yankees, Hank Aaron (**picture**) was the big, power hitter for the then Milwaukee Braves. The teams were playing in the World Series. As usual Yogi was keeping up his ceaseless chatter, peppering up his teammates and trying to distract the Milwaukee batters.

As Aaron came to the plate, Yogi tried to distract him, "Henry, you're holding the bat wrong. You're supposed to hold it so you can read the trademark." Aaron didn't say a word, but when the next pitch came he slammed it into the left-field bleachers. After rounding the bases and tagging Home he looked at Yogi and said, "I didn't come up here to read."

Hank Aaron knew why he was there. He knew his purpose. Too many don't. Waking up feeling purposeless is terribly frustrating. Too many, even too many Christians, live purposeless lives.

Maybe that's you. You see friends and coworkers living passionate, meaningful lives. They have deep relationships, rewarding jobs and a sense of direction that gets them to pop out of bed each morning with a spring in their step.

We'll either drag through life with no clear sense of direction or we'll live lives of purpose and fulfillment. The race is on. Where are you going and what are you doing about it? **What's Driving You?**

Everyone is driven by something - guilt, worry, insecurity, anger, resentment, success, possessions, pleasure, money, etc. God wants us to be purpose driven people, driven by His plan for our lives. It's where meaning and significance come. Paul Nitze (**picture**) wisely said, "*One of the most dangerous forms of human error is forgetting what one is trying to achieve.*"

That's particularly true in the Christian life. It's easy to become sidetracked. We need to be clear and focused on what it is we're going after. What's the goal of the Christian life? What should drive us? If we forget, we probably won't to achieve it.

It can be stated several ways. In our passage in Philippians 3:10-11, Paul nicely sums up what we're to be aiming at: **The goal of the Christian life is to know Christ and to be like Him.** It's that simple, yet that profound.

Christianity isn't a religion of rules to keep. It's a personal, growing relationship with the risen Christ that results in our growing conformity to Him. Our goal is to know Him and to become like Him. As we work through these two verses, if you're taking notes...

1. The goal of the Christian life is to know Christ. Complete the following sentence in your mind: "I want _____." It's a very open-ended statement, isn't it? If you're single, you may have finished the statement with: "I want...to get married." If you're miserable at work, you may have finished it with: "I want...a new job." If you're deep in debt, you may have finished it with: "I want...to get out of debt." And if you're a kid, you may have finished it with, "I want...a Play Station 4 Pro!"

Did you notice how Paul finished that statement? "*I want...to know Christ.*" Paul already knew Christ. He'd come to know Jesus through a dramatic encounter on the road to Damascus. But Paul's overarching desire was to know Jesus Christ more fully and deeply.

How can we know Christ? To begin with, we must have first met Him. Before we know anyone, we see them in the media or read about them, or we notice them in a room and hope to be introduced.

American writer, Joan Didion (**picture**), took her six-year old daughter around an exhibition of paintings by Georgia O'Keefe (**pictures**). The little girl stared at those colorful paintings and after a bit she said to her mother, "*Mommy, I want to meet her.*" She saw some things about Georgia O'Keefe's paintings that intrigued her and inspired her to want to know her.

There was a time when Paul met Jesus. Like Paul, before we can ever *know* Jesus, we must first *meet* Jesus. A believer doesn't only know about Christ, a Christian has met Jesus Christ personally.

How do we meet Jesus? The Bible tells us how a person can meet Jesus as his/her personal Savior and come into a living and growing relationship with Him. How do we do that?

First, you must acknowledge that you're a sinner and need a Savior. While some may think "I'm a good person," everyone has committed sin. "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). The price of sin is death but Jesus died so that we don't have to.

Second, understand that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again. God graciously supplied a substitute to pay the penalty that you and I deserve. "*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

Third, put your trust in Christ as your Savior. God invites you to come into a relationship with Him through faith in Christ's death on your behalf. "For by grace you have been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

If we went around this room and asked husbands and wives to tell how they met their mate, we'd hear many different stories. Some met each other as teens; others were further along in life. Some were looking for a mate at the time they met their partner; others weren't looking at all. Some met but things didn't develop between them for many months or even years. Others met and things took off like a rocket. For some it was love at first sight; for others, a long friendship led to romance and marriage. But for everyone, you began a personal relationship with your mate and because of it, your life took a new direction that it never would have taken if you'd never met.

It's the same with your relationship with Jesus Christ. Your introduction to Jesus was far different than Paul's. You may have met Christ as a young child. Or, maybe you met Him later in life. It may have been a traumatic situation, where in a moment of crisis you called out to Him and were saved. It may have been less dramatic, so that you can't even recall the precise details. But one thing is certain: If you're truly a Christian, you know Jesus Christ personally. You don't just know about Him; you know Him. You can say with Paul that He is "*Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

Like any relationship, once you've met, you must cultivate that relationship. You must spend time together, getting to know one another through conversation and shared experiences. It's the same in a personal relationship with Christ. It requires cultivation and that requires time.

It's always amazing how a young man and young woman can be extremely busy, but when they meet and things click, suddenly they can find hours to be together. What were they doing to fill all those hours before? Whatever it was, it's shoved aside so that they can pursue this new relationship.

If you want to know Jesus, you must spend time with the Lord. You have to read His love letter to you, the Bible. You must talk to Him, sharing your heart in prayer. We grow in our knowing the Lord Jesus. Like Paul, we're focused on that great goal, "*to know Him.*" As you know Him, you do what pleases Him. You know what His Word says and seek to please Him by obeying His commandments. You have a biblical worldview. Knowing Him means there will always be growing obedience and seeking to please Him.

2. The goal of the Christian life to be like Christ, "*and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*" Makeover shows are very popular. Whether it's a home, a car, or a person, people love to see things transformed.

Have you ever thought about how you'd change yourself? Maybe a tummy tuck, hair plugs, a nose job, or some dental work? The difference can be profound. Ugly can be made beautiful. But for how long?

Live in a house and soon it will return to its previous state of disrepair. Put enough miles on a car and it ends up at the junk yard. But when we meet Jesus and He changes us, those changes are permanent. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*"

When you met your future mate, fell in love, and got married, your life was permanently changed. You're never the same. It's the same, only much more so, when you meet Jesus. He marks you for life. The more time you spend growing to know Him, the more you're different. The rest of these verses show the ingredients and direction of change that come with knowing Christ.

Knowing Christ is powerful, the power of His resurrection. In Paul's world, Jews were proud of their religion; Greeks were proud of their wisdom. But the Romans were proud of their *power*. To them it was the greatest reality in the world. Rome ruled the world.

Paul knew though that the strongest power of all was the resurrection power of Christ, God's power. Power against which even sin and Rome were powerless. That's the partnership Paul wanted. He'd already experienced that power in his conversion. He'd been knocked on his rear-end on the Damascus Road and been face-to-face with Jesus. It was a powerful demonstration, yet nothing compared to what happened inside!

Paul started that day "*dead in trespasses and sins* (Eph 2:1). Spiritually, he was stone-cold dead! But then came his miracle of resurrection at salvation. Ephesians 2:4-5: "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.*" Because Jesus is alive, Paul was given spiritual life – resurrection power – not achievable by any human means.

Paul longed for resurrection power in daily life. He wanted the power that would enable him to win over temptation and sin. He had the same battle we all do – our old nature. It's so frustrating to be freed from slavery to sin, but only to keep going back. We all fight that battle.

God doesn't just snap His fingers and make us perfect overnight. It's a process. As we yield more and more to His control, we become more plugged in to God's power. This is what Paul longs for. He wants to know God's power in daily life helping him deny sin and act more like Jesus.

George Steinbrenner (**picture**) wanted a clean Yankee Stadium. When graffiti began to show up, the war was on. Someone asked his strategy. Steinbrenner replied, "I have our workers paint over it every single day." "But they'll just tag it again the next day." He said, "That's right. But I can buy more paint than they can. In the end, I'll win." And win he did. That's the kind of war over sin in this life that Paul knew he was in. With Christ's resurrection power, he knew he had the advantage. In the end, he'd win.

That same resurrection power is necessary to sustain us to walk in victory over sin. Paul prays for the Christians at Ephesus (Eph. 3:16-17) that God "*would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*"

Knowing Christ is painful, and may share His sufferings. In January of 2003, a 68-year old American Christian named Joseph William Cooper was walking to a friend's house from a gospel meeting near Kilimanoor in the south of India. Suddenly ten militant Hindus armed with clubs and crowbars attacked them. He ended up in ICU. Around the world Christians are attacked or killed nearly every day. The Church is experiencing the fellowship of sharing in Christ's suffering.

Open Doors (**picture**) has an app to remind people to pray for persecuted Christians and to remember the worldwide suffering church. Christ-followers from the time of the Apostles until today, could have had quiet lives, delivered from hatred, beatings, prison, or martyrdom if only they'd hidden that they were Christians. The moment they confessed Christ, they suffered as Christ had, simply for being Christ-followers.

Our Savior came to suffer for our sins on the cross. His entire ministry was marked by misunderstanding, opposition, betrayal, and finally death. While we can never enter into His sufferings in the same way He suffered on the cross, there's a sense too in which we can never be like Him if we don't go through suffering and learn to entrust our souls to Him even in suffering.

Fellowship points to closeness or intimacy. Though few of us as American Christians know it, those who suffer because of their faith in Christ experience a special intimacy with Him. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were thrown into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's idol, the king looked and didn't see three, but four men, walking in the fire (**picture**). The 4th was the pre-incarnate Christ who stood with them in their hour of trial. They knew the fellowship of His sufferings.

Paul knew this fellowship. When he was preaching in corrupt Corinth, he was afraid. The Lord appeared to him in a vision and said, "*Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city*" (Acts 18:9-10).

Knowing Christ is practical, becoming like Him in His death. Three great questions plague the mind of most people: *Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?* This world has no answers because they refuse the answers in God's Word. It's the reason people are so empty and lonely, and the suicide rate is so high. Those who don't take their own lives often meander about like the walking dead. They have no purpose!

This verse makes it clear what our purpose is as believers: *Death*. It's death to self. It's only as we die to our own self-will and ambitions and live for something greater than ourselves that we truly begin living! Do you want resurrection power? There has to be a death! Yours and mine!

This phrase is related to "*the fellowship of His sufferings*" and grows out of it. It adds another dimension that Paul describes in other places, dying to sin and self through the cross of Christ. When we trust Christ, we're placed "*in Christ.*" We're identified with Him in His death and resurrection, yet we must live out *experientially* what's true *positionally*.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul states, "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.*" In Colossians 3:5, just after explaining how we've died and been raised up with Christ (3:1-4), he urges us to "*put to death*" the members of our bodies with regard to various sins.

John Eldredge (**picture**) says, "*The most dangerous man on earth is the man who has reckoned with his own death. All men die; few men ever really live. Sure, you can create a safe life for yourself...and end your days in a rest home babbling on about some forgotten misfortune. I'd rather go down swinging. Besides, the less we are trying to 'save ourselves,' the more effective a warrior we will be.*"

It's what Jesus meant when He said that whoever follows Him must deny self and take up his cross daily (Luke 9:23). Jesus always lived by denying the temptation to live in His own power or for His own ends. He lived only to do His Father's will. To the degree that we learn to die to self and sin by being conformed to His death, to that same degree we grow to be like Him.

Knowing Christ doesn't end with this world, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. To be like Christ will be ultimately realized in the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:11 literally says, "*if*

somehow I may attain to the out-resurrection from among the dead ones.” The word “out-resurrection” occurs here only.

It refers to the future resurrection of believers at the return of Christ, when our mortal bodies will be transformed into the likeness of His resurrection body, free from the very presence of sin for all eternity. We’ll share in His glory throughout eternity.

Paul is certain about the future resurrection (1 Cor. 15), yet uncertain about the manner in which he’d attain it, whether he might still be alive when Christ returned. Christ’s return is imminent. It could happen at any moment.

Now you may be thinking, “But it’s been 2,000 years.” Friend, it’s 2,000 years closer. Most doubted His first coming. Many doubt that He will return.

We like Paul must long to be like Him, free from sin, sharing in His glory for eternity (Rom. 8:17-21, 30). 1 John 3:2-3, *“we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.”*

When Jimmy Carter (**picture**) was President, on several occasions he’d spend the night in a home of average Americans. Of course, he didn’t drop in unannounced! Those folk had fair warning that he was coming on a particular date and I’m sure that they had to agree to the visit.

If you knew that the President would come at some unknown date to stay in your home, and that the news cameras would be there to broadcast the state of your living room to the world, you’d be very motivated to clean the house!

Paul wanted to be ready. He knew Christ could return at any moment. Jesus is coming. When you see Him in His glory, you’ll be like Him. And when your hope is fixed on Him, you’ll start cleaning your house now!

Conclusion: What’s driving you? Our goal should be to know Christ and to become more and more like Him. Is that your goal? If it is, you should have thought about it this past week. It should be continually on your mind.

Have you ever noticed that when you buy a new car, you suddenly see that make of car everywhere? When we bought our van a few years ago, all of a sudden we saw them everywhere.

If you will set before yourself each week this goal, to know Christ and be like Him, you’ll begin to constantly see opportunities to apply it. You’ll have temptations where you need to rely on the power of His resurrection. You’ll face trials where you experience the fellowship of His sufferings. You’ll encounter irritations where you learn to be more conformed to His death.

View it all as an opportunity to know Christ and to remind you that it is preparing you for that great day when He comes and you’ll be raised up in glory with Him for all eternity. That’s our goal! That’s what needs to drive us. Is it what’s driving you?

Arthur Burns (**picture**), was a Jewish economist and one time head of the Federal Reserve, a person of great influence in Washington during the tenure of several Presidents. On one occasion he was asked to pray at a gathering of evangelical politicians. He stunningly prayed: *“Lord, I pray that Jews would come to know Jesus Christ. And I pray that Buddhists would come to know Jesus Christ. And I pray that Muslims would come to know Jesus Christ.”* And then, most stunning of all: *“And Lord, I pray that Christians would come to know Jesus Christ.”*

Let’s be part of the answer to that prayer. Let’s commit to truly knowing Jesus.

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”