

What do You Want?

By: Clay Morris

That's a seemingly easy question to answer, right? I'm sure most would answer this question with "I want to go to heaven". Here is my challenge: Is that a deeply rooted answer to that question or is that an unconscious phrase we respond with? I would dare say that the answer to that question is quite shallow and needs more substance. There's nothing inherently wrong with that answer, but it needs more specificity to grow powerful. So how can we improve our answer? Remember this answer is not for others. This answer is for **YOU**. It is what drives you and pushes you forward. If your answer is an unconscious response of "I want to get to heaven" than that equates to a lawn mower motor trying to power a train. It would try but would give up because it doesn't have enough power to drive it forward. So, let's look at ways to improve that answer.

1.) Avoiding Complacency

Phil. 3:12-14 is an excellent place to grab one answer to our question. Let's break it down and grab a more powerful answer.

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...."

Paul was knowledgeable and preached the Word abound, yet he knew that he still had a lot of work to do. He didn't allow himself to just "go with the flow" or settle into a routine of comfort. Paul had a drive to move forward always. So, what drove him?

"...but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

Paul was driven by the goal of resurrection. His drive was to be deeply root in attaining the perfection through Christ. Christ had already made Paul his own. It was Paul's responsibility to make his hope of resurrection his own. So how did Paul move forward in this responsibility?

"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind..."

Paul moved forward by forgetting the past. There is a powerful lesson in just these 4 words. Forget the mistakes of the past and dispose of the proverbial skeletons in the closet that seek to remind you of them. Forget the wrongs done to you from the past and forgive those that wronged you. Paul makes it sound easy right? It's not.

"...and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal..."

Paul makes it clear that pushing forward is no easy task. It takes work and will be a strain on your drive forward. It's hard for a human to forget what is in the past sometimes especially when there is pain involved. Satan enjoys pain because it is a powerful tool of control. Pain(whether physical or emotional) seeps into your mind and roots itself firmly. Moving forward most often involves a struggle and a fight against Satan who wishes to lock you in place. Paul knows it is a

struggle but encourages us to press on to the goal. So, what was the goal that made the straining worth it?

“...for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

What drove Paul was the prize. That prize is God calling him to be at home in heaven with Him. Paul knew that the straining to move forward was to reach the most valuable reward a Christian can achieve. It's required a lot of work and there is no room for complacency. If we settle in with the knowledge we have, we are not pressing on. So, what did Paul want?

Paul wanted eternal life, but he also knew it would be a journey of tremendous effort. Let's form an answer from Philippians 3:12-14.

What do you want?

I want to attain eternal life and be at home in heaven with God when my time on Earth is done. I know the path will be difficult, but I will maintain my focus on the road ahead. The past is a snare that Satan will use against me. I know God has forgiven me and I will press forward to the prize that he has offered me.

2) Courage to Stand Firm

Daniel 3:1-28 is a popular story taught from a very young age. The story of three men against a fiery furnace. Let's see how we can strengthen our answer from this story.

In verses 1-13, we read of King Nebuchadnezzar created a large golden image. A command was given to all the people to fall and worship the image when they heard instruments sounding. The penalty for refusal to worship this image was certain death in a burning furnace. A terrible and intimidating fate to all those in the area. This fate fell upon three men that were brought before the king. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to fall before the image and King Nebuchadnezzar was furious. In the face of an angry king and certain death, how did these men respond?

Dan. 3:17-18: If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

These men had a strong conviction to serve God and Him only. In the face of an angry king who would have them killed, they stood firm to God. They knew God had the power to deliver them from the fiery furnace if it was His will. On the other hand, they were still committed to God even if His will was not to spare them.

Now of course we know that these men were delivered by God to King Nebuchadnezzar's astonishment. What if they hadn't been delivered? Perhaps King Nebuchadnezzar would have then believed that God was not as powerful as his gods. For Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they would have attained salvation for their commitment to God unto death.

I can safely assume there was a lot of pressure on these three men. There, possibly, were dignitaries in the courts mocking, whispering, and scoffing at their conviction. They had an angry king demanding answers for their refusal to bow to his image. Above all, they had a terrible death by fire facing them. Yet they shut out the fear and focused on God's power. That action takes an enormous amount of courage. So, what did these three men want?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego wanted eternal life, but knew it would take unwavering commitment to Him. Let's form an answer from this event.

What do you want?

I want to serve God regardless of the circumstances I may face. If I face those that express anger toward my conviction in God, I will have the courage to stand firm in my faith. I will worship the God who can deliver me and give me eternal life.

3) Don't Let Abundance Blind You

Mark 10:17-22 tells the account of the rich young ruler. For a topic on "What do you want", wealth is a major driving force in society today. In the world's view, wealth is what defines a person. Let's see what we can grab from this account to strengthen our subject's answer.

"Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?"

The rich young ruler had good intentions. He ran to Jesus seeking the answer to this question. He wanted to inherit eternal life. How deeply did he want it though?

Jesus lays out the commandments that everyone in that time was aware of. The rich young ruler was prepared and probably excited to proclaim his next statement.

"Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth."

I can almost feel the excitement within this young man. He was ready for this question and was able to gladly say that he had kept to them. I'm sure he was certain that the next task would be easy since he had accomplished so much already. Unfortunately, he wasn't ready for what Christ informs him is the task he must perform for eternal life. Jesus tells him to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. Jesus tells the rich young ruler that the real treasure is in heaven if he only follows Him. How did the young man take it?

"But he was deeply dismayed by these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property."

Being offered eternal life was "too expensive" to the rich young ruler. His abundance defined him along with the comforts that came with it. The problem with the rich young ruler was he adhered to a checklist. Do not murder, check. Do not commit adultery, check. Do not steal, check. He had done all the commandments properly since his youth and was possibly a good young man. Unfortunately, he allowed the joys of his abundance to define who he was.

It is apparent that without his wealth, he felt worthless. His worth was defined by his possessions. He obeyed the commandments to check the list off, not to define him. Therefore, Jesus says in **verse 23**,

“How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

Notice that Jesus did not say it is impossible, just that it is hard. There is a great temptation to allow the comforts of wealth to overtake the comfort found in Christ. After Jesus offered him the method, the rich young ruler viewed eternal life as a price tag. He had all the riches in the world, but eternal life can't be purchased by wealth. He went away “deeply dismayed” because he was blinded by his abundance and the comforts of them. The bottom line is that he would rather lose everything than lose what was everything to him. The rich young ruler wasn't ready to commit to what he thought he wanted.

The rich young ruler wanted eternal life. Sadly, he was defined by his earthly abundance and blinded by it. Let's form an answer from this tragic account.

What do you want?

I want to be content knowing that the Lord provides for me and has offered me eternal life. The abundance I may have is from God and I will use it in service to Him. It is not the blessings that define me, but my God who blesses me.

This is obviously a self-reflection question as it would be awkward asking everyone you see “What do you want” without context. However, it is one that is beneficial to increasing your spiritual drive forward. If we want to attain eternal life, we must, like Paul, press on to the goal even though it may strain us. It will require unwavering commitment that will require courage to stand firm in the face of all circumstances. Lastly, we must allow God to define us, not the things that we have on this earth.

So, what do you want? Only you know and only you can answer that for yourself. Don't short yourself. Meditate on it and pray to God about it. Let the once tiny little motor become a roaring engine that drives your spirit in God's kingdom. We all want eternal life, but we all need to be specific on what we are going to do to get there.