



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

A-MAZE-IN Life Series, Lesson 1

Lesson Title: Grace for the Race

Take Home Point: God won heaven for you – be a winner for him.

Warm-Up:

"I can't do it." Have you ever heard these words or spoken them yourself? Sometimes the "can't" is hidden behind others phrases: "It's too hard," or "I'll never be good enough." When a person makes an honest attempt to do their best and still cannot achieve the goal for whatever reason, it is understandable to hear these words. The problem arises when these phrases are used as an excuse to not try or give up without applying best effort. When my children tell me they failed to do something or they could not do it, I always ask, "Did you give it your best effort?" If they answer yes, I remind them that they can't do better than their best and it is enough. Winning is not always about being #1 or achieving the desire or getting the perfect score; it is about perseverance, commitment, and best effort.

Read: Philippians 3:12-14

Observation (What happened?):

Why does Paul say he presses on?

What direction does Paul look as he lives for the Lord?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What do you think Paul put behind him as he looked ahead and pressed forward?

What does it mean that a prize awaited Paul in heaven?

Insight:

Was Paul perfect? Of course not, as he admitted in verse 12. (For an idea of his self-frustration, read Romans 7.) So he must have failed at times. Do you think Paul knew the exact purpose God had for him? Not likely. Paul was a human being just like you and me; he knew he was to serve the Lord as an apostle. But that doesn't mean he heard a voice tell him exactly what steps to take, exactly what to do, and exactly what to say. He knew he was called by God to preach the gospel, so he gave that his best effort. When he fell down, he got up. He put the past behind him and kept moving forward. The past is unchangeable. It is what we do with it that matters. We can learn from it, put it behind us, and keep going. Or we can live in regret, remorse, or longing. But while we look back, we cannot look forward. As someone once said, "To live in the past in remorse or reminiscence limits the ability to deal with the present." And if we are not dealing with the present, how can we know what God wants us to be and do as we "...press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus?"

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How do you forget what is in the past and unchangeable?

What do you believe Jesus Christ wants you to reach for in living for him?

Kingdom Quest Year 2 – Lesson 1