

4-Week
Growth
Group
Series



Phillipians
3:12-14

READY.

SET.

PRESS.

*I press on toward the goal
for the prize of the
upward call of God in
Christ Jesus.*

Keep
Going

Letter from Stephen Herrod

In Scripture, the language Paul uses in Philippians 3 is the language of pursuit. He says, “I press on.” The word διώκω (dee-oh-koe) speaks of intentional movement, pursuing, chasing, pressing forward with focus and resolve. It is not rushed striving, but purposeful direction.

We often summarize the Christian life as belief or decision, but Scripture reminds us that following Christ is also movement. It is a journey marked by growth, obedience, and transformation. Faith is not static. It is lived, shaped, and formed over time.

Nevertheless, pressing forward does not mean pretending we have arrived. Paul is clear: “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect.” Progress does not equal completion. Growth does not mean we are finished. The Christian life is not about reaching a point where God no longer needs to work on us, but about remaining open to the work God is still doing.

Pressing forward is not driven by guilt or comparison, but by grace. Paul presses on not to earn Christ, but because Christ has already taken hold of him. That truth changes everything. We move forward not to prove ourselves, but because God is faithful to complete what He has begun.

When we live with this posture, we begin to understand that being “not there yet” is not failure. It is formation. God shapes us in the process. He works through the unfinished places, the growing edges, and the areas still being refined. Pressing forward means trusting God in the in-between.



This series, READY. SET. PRESS., is an invitation to live with intention and honesty. To release the pressure to pretend. To stop settling into comfort or stagnation. To recognize that God is calling us forward, not all at once, but step by step.

As you walk through these weeks, may you find freedom in naming where you are and courage to keep moving toward where God is leading you. May you learn to let go of what lies behind, fix your focus on what matters most, and press forward with faith, endurance, and trust.

My prayer is that by the end of this journey, you will not simply understand what it means to press, but that your life will reflect it. Not a life marked by arrival, but by faithfulness. Not perfection, but progress. A life continually moving toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "L".

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made.

But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward - to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Phillipians 3:12-14 MSG



Understanding Your Study Guide

Here's a quick overview of what you'll find in this study guide.



SESSION FLOW

Each week's session provides a Session Flow section to help you navigate that week's material. A short video lesson will be provided in advance for your group to watch before the meeting. Brief notes will be included to help reinforce key points and guide your conversation and application.



CHECK-IN

Begin each meeting by checking in with one another. This will look different from week to week but may include follow-up from the video, reflections, spiritual check-ins, or simple life updates. This time is all about accountability, honesty, and connection. You're not doing this alone.



INTRODUCTION

Every session starts with a written introduction to frame the theme. Be sure to read the Introduction aloud during your small group meeting to set the tone for the discussion.





OPENING PRAYER

Open with prayer to center your hearts and minds. Receive the Holy Spirit to give direction, clarity, and personal insight. Ask God to help you not just understand the Word, but apply it.



BIBLE READING

Each week includes Scripture passage(s) for your group to read together. If someone has a different translation, invite them to read it aloud to help give a fuller picture of the text. After reading, take a few minutes to reflect on the question: “What are you hearing?” Everyone doesn’t need to respond aloud, allow space for silent reflection too.



Discussion Questions

A few discussion questions will be included each week to help your group go deeper. You don’t need to cover every question, go at your own pace. The goal is not to “get through it all” but to make space for honest reflection and Spirit-led conversation.



Prayer prompts

Wrap up each session with prayer. Short prompts will help guide your time together. Invite group members to share requests.





GO D.I.G. (DEEPER IN GOD)

This optional section will include additional scriptures, reflection prompts, or spiritual practices to explore after the meeting. You're also encouraged to add your own resources and insights to go even deeper together within community.



LOOKING AHEAD

Before closing each session, be sure to check out this section. It includes helpful info and direction to prepare you for the next week's gathering. Think of it as your heads-up for what's coming so you and your group can stay ready and in rhythm.



A Tip for Group Leader-Servant

Remember: This study guide is just that, a guide. The goal isn't to rush through every question or force everyone to speak. It's to create space for people to hear from God, share if they feel led, and grow together. Trust the flow. Let God lead. There's no need to have everyone answer each question before moving on. Allow space for those who want to share, but don't require it. Groups tend to go deeper and have more meaningful conversations when people don't feel pressured to speak.



WEEK 1

NOT THERE YET



Not There Yet – Notes

Note for Group Leaders and Participants:

These notes are designed to accompany the weekly teaching video and are meant to help you prepare your heart and mind ahead of group time. However, they are not intended to be read or relied on during the group session. Let the Spirit guide the conversation. Let the group listen to one another, sit with the Word, and trust that God will meet you right where you are.

Scripture References:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect,”
–Phillipians 3:12a ESV

1. Paul begins with honest spiritual assessment.

Text focus: “Not that I have already obtained” (οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον)

Context: Paul has just listed his former religious credentials (Phil. 3:4–6) and then renounced them as loss for Christ (3:7–11). Before resolving to press forward, he first names where he is, and where he is not.

- Paul refuses to pretend he has arrived spiritually.
- The Christian life begins with honesty and truth, not fabrication and lies.



Not There Yet – Notes

2. “Obtained” points to fulfillment, not information.

Text focus: Obtained (ἔλαβον) means “to receive, to take hold of”

Context: This verb is not about learning more facts or knowing more Scripture. It refers to fully receiving or laying hold of the goal Paul just described: knowing Christ fully, sharing in His sufferings, and resurrection life (3:10–11).

- Faith is not measured by information alone, but transformation.
- Paul knows Christ, but he acknowledges he has not fully laid hold of all Christ intends.
- Spiritual honesty creates room for continued growth.

3. “Already” highlights the danger of premature arrival.

Text focus: ἤδη — “already”

Context: Paul uses “already” to reject the idea that Christian maturity equals completion. This confronts a common temptation of mistaking progress for arrival.

- Growth does not mean completion.
- Past victories do not equal present faithfulness.



Not There Yet – Notes

4. “Perfect” does not mean flawless, but fully complete.

Text focus: “Or am already perfect”

Context: This word does not describe moral perfection but reaching the intended end or goal. Paul is saying, “I have not yet become everything God intends me to be.”

- God’s work in us, for us, and through us, is ongoing.
- Salvation is secure, but formation is still in process (sanctification).

TAKEAWAYS

- You cannot press forward if you pretend you’ve already arrived.
- Spiritual growth begins with honest self-awareness, not comparison.
- Being “not there yet” does not mean failure, but it can mean formation.
- God is committed to your process,
- The refusal to admit incompleteness is often the greatest barrier to growth.
- A mature faith says, “God isn’t finished with me yet.”
- Freedom comes when we stop pretending and start pressing.





SESSION FLOW

For Your Discipleship Group Meeting

- **CHECK-IN**
- **OPENING PRAYER**
- Read the **INTRODUCTION** to Week 1 together as a group.
- Read Phillipians 3:1-14 out loud every week.
- Answer the **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** as a group.
- Engage by following the **PRAYER PROMPT**.
- Close by Mentioning the **GO D.I.G. (DEEPER IN GOD)** for the week and **LOOKING AHEAD**.

CHECK-IN – 5 MINUTES

OPENING PRAYER – 3 MINUTES

Read the **INTRODUCTION** to Week 1 together as a group - 2 minutes

Read Phillipians 3:1-14 out loud – 10 minutes

Answer the **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** as a group – 30 minutes

Wrap up by following the **PRAYER PROMPT** – 10 minutes

Close by Mentioning the **GO D.I.G. (DEEPER IN GOD)** for the week and **LOOKING AHEAD** – 2 minutes



CHECK-IN

- Take a few minutes to reconnect and check in with one another. (If your group is new or has new members, take time to introduce yourselves and share how you came to be part of this group.)
- Be honest: have there been areas in your life where you feel pressure to act like you've "arrived," even though you know you're still growing? Are there places where pretending to be okay has kept you from being honest with God or others?
- When you think about your faith journey right now, do you feel more encouraged by how far you've come, or more discouraged by how far you still have to go?
- What's one area of your life where you sense God is still working, where you're clearly "not there yet"?
- Do you find it easier to admit growth in private or in community?

(Answer one, some, or none, no pressure at all).





INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Week 1 of READY. SET. PRESS.

If we're honest, many of us feel caught in between.

Not who we used to be, but not quite where we want to be.

Not what we once were, but not yet what God is forming us to become.

And that space in between can be uncomfortable.

Life has a way of making us feel like we should be further along by now.

Further spiritually.

Further emotionally.

Further financially.

Further relationally.

And when we don't feel like we've arrived, the pressure sets in.

We may begin to act like we've got it all together, even when we don't.

We highlight progress but hide process.

We celebrate growth while quietly wrestling with what still isn't right.

And maybe the tension you're feeling isn't failure at all.



Maybe it's formation.

Paul opens Philippians 3:12 with an honest confession:

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

That's Paul.

Mature.

Faithful.

Used by God.

And he still says, "I'm not there yet."

Before Paul ever talks about pressing forward, he names where he is.

He refuses to fake arrival.

He refuses to confuse progress with completion.

He teaches us that honesty is not a setback, it's the starting point.

Because you can't move forward if you're pretending you've already arrived.

You can't press if you're performing.

And you can't grow if you won't be honest.

This series begins right here, with truth.

Not condemnation.

Not comparison.

Truth.



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READY. SET. PRESS. is not about rushing the process.

It's about embracing it.

It's about releasing the pressure to be perfect and receiving the invitation to keep moving with God.

Paul reminds us that spiritual maturity doesn't mean you're finished, it means you're faithful enough to keep going.

Not there yet doesn't mean you're behind. It means God is still at work.

So this week, we start by naming it.

You're not there yet.

And that's okay.

Because God isn't finished with you.

Because grace is still forming you.

Because the same God who started the work is committed to completing it.

This week's goal is simple:

To be honest about where you are without shame.

To stop pretending.

To release the pressure to arrive.



Let's reflect on this truth together:
Being "not there yet" is not a weakness—it's
an invitation.
And the freedom to press forward begins
when we tell the truth about where we are.





BIBLE READING

Have someone read the passages out loud.

Philippians 3:1–14 ESV

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ



⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

What are you hearing?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where in your life do you feel the tension of being “not there yet”? Spiritually, emotionally, relationally, or personally, name it honestly.
2. Have you ever felt pressure (from church, family, social media, or yourself) to look more spiritually mature than you actually felt? What did that pressure do to you?
3. Paul openly admits he hasn’t arrived. What emotions come up for you when you hear that? relief, discomfort, fear, freedom? Why do you think that is?
4. Are there areas where you’ve mistaken progress for arrival, where you stopped growing because you felt “good enough”? What might God be inviting you to revisit?
5. What’s something in your past (a failure, regret, success, or season) that you might still be holding onto that affects how you see yourself today?
6. How do you usually respond when you realize you’re still in process—do you get discouraged, defensive, motivated, or avoidant?



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PRAYER PROMPTS

As a group, take time to thank God for meeting us right where we are, not where we think we should be, not where others expect us to be, but exactly where we are in this moment. Thank God for God's grace that does not rush us, God's patience that does not shame us, and God's faithfulness that stays with us in the process. Thank God for progress we can see and growth that's still happening beneath the surface.

Offer prayers of honesty, surrender, and trust together:

- Thank God that He has already taken hold of you, even while He is still forming you.
- Thank Him for the freedom to admit, "I'm not there yet," without fear or condemnation.
- Ask for courage to let go of what's behind you: past failures, past successes, past versions of yourself.
- Pray for strength and focus to keep pressing forward, one faithful step at a time.
- Ask God to help you trust the process and remain open to His ongoing work in your life.



Take a moment to sit with this truth: growth happens when honesty meets grace.

Breath Prayer (pray slowly when you need to):

Inhale: "I'm not there yet..."

Exhale: "...but You're still working on me."



Closing Group Prayer

“God, thank You for meeting us right where we are. Thank You for reminding us that growth is a journey and that You are not finished with us yet. Forgive us for the moments we’ve felt pressure to pretend, to perform, or to act like we’ve already arrived. Help us to be honest about where we are without shame or fear.

Teach us to trust Your work in us, even when progress feels slow and the process feels uncomfortable. When we’re tempted to compare, to look back, or to get discouraged, remind us that You have already taken hold of us in Christ Jesus.

Give us the courage to release what’s behind us and the faith to keep pressing forward one step at a time. Anchor our hearts in Your grace and help us remain open, teachable, and willing as You continue shaping us. We thank You, not because we are finished, but because You are faithful. Thank You for Your patience, Your mercy, and Your presence that walks with us every step of the way.

In Jesus’ name,
Amen.”





GO D.I.G. (DEEPER IN GOD)

Optional but Encouraged: Take Time This Week to Go Deeper

Practice:

This week, identify one area of your life where you're most aware that you're "not there yet." It could be a habit you're still working on, a relationship that feels unfinished, a calling you're still discerning, or a part of your faith that feels stuck or unclear.

Pause and ask God to help you name that place honestly, without shame or self-judgment. Then ask God to show you where growth is already happening, even if it feels slow or subtle.

Write it down. Each day this week, pray over that area and intentionally remind yourself: God is still working here. Pay attention to how naming the process, rather than resisting it, changes your posture and perspective.



Be prepared to share with the group throughout the week or next week:

- The area of your life where you acknowledged you're "not there yet"
- What you noticed once you stopped pretending and started being honest
- How releasing pressure to arrive affected your faith, emotions, or decisions
- What new clarity, peace, or motivation emerged as you trusted the process

Connect & Check-In:

As a group, lean into accountability by committing and following up together:

- What's one area of your life where you feel the strongest pressure to have it all together?
- How can this group help you stay honest, encouraged, and moving forward instead of stuck or discouraged?





LOOKING AHEAD

Make sure to watch the video in advance of next week's meeting, and continue to prioritize this time together.

Throughout the week, keep your gratitude on repeat, and make regular deposits to your Gratitude Jar, and pull one out whenever you are discouraged or need to be re-centered. Come prepared to share how that practice is shaping your perspective.





READY.

SET.

PRESS.