

Winning in 2018 - Part 1 Focus on Jesus

What's the vision of the church? To preach the Gospel and make disciples of Jesus - by loving Jesus and having a passion for those things that Jesus is passionate about and serving our community. To be Jesus in our neighbourhood. Passion is: zeal, commitment, focus, desire, enthusiasm, energy, tenacity.

We started this year with prayer and its importance for us as a church moving forward. I spoke on the focus of prayer from 1Tim 2:1-5

Prayer to be offered for everyone asking God to help them and bless them, Prayer must be offered for the nation, for those in authority, Prayer must be offered so that people will be saved because God desires that all men will be saved and will come to the knowledge of the truth, which will set them free. We did pray on Wednesdays and Thursdays as a church.

Prayer is still the backbone for any church and will continue in 2018. Hence the Hour of Power on Sundays.

In any race winning follows preparation and I believe this year we as a church are going to experience great things, so get ready! Passion for the kingdom comes from within. You have to get into it. How badly do you want to see the church advance and grow and people getting saved? How desperate are we to see God at work here and in our lives?

I am starting a 4 part series on winning because this year it is about winning.

Launching into 2018 as a winner

Hebrews 12:1-3 A huge cloud of witnesses is all around us, the pioneers of the faith, the veterans cheering us on, So let us throw off / strip off everything that stands in our way or slows us down. Let us throw off any sin that holds on to us so tightly. And let us keep on running the race marked out for us. 2 Let us keep looking to Jesus. He is the one who started this journey of faith. And he is the one who completes the journey of faith. He paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to. Then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. You won't get tired, you won't lose hope.

You have to keep looking to/unto Jesus. There is a difference between looking "to" or "unto" Jesus and looking "at" Jesus. Many times we look at Jesus and nothing changes. When we look to Jesus then we are drawing from Him. Its not a case of aspiring to but it is being involved in actively drawing from Him. You look to Jesus for strength, for endurance to run, for power to overcome the obstacles. How many know that there are obstacles called challenges that we often encounter. Challenges help us grow by stretching us from being comfortable to uncomfortable. A challenge is like the stretching of a muscle. If a muscle is not stretched it would atrophy.

Challenges help shape our character, round out any rough edges, give us lessons we need for our future success and most importantly allow us to realise our potential that we absolutely can manage through anything that comes our way. As Christians we have a guarantee through Jesus to face any situation and win.

Paul says in *Philippians 1:27* says, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Most people focus on the second part of the verse, "to die is gain," and contemplate the joys of heaven. But we should not overlook what comes before. The importance of the phrase "to live is Christ" cannot be overstated. In all honesty, this phrase should be central to every Christian's life.

For Paul, Jesus was his author and his finisher.

Have you ever considered a runner? How does one run? with minimum on. Runners strip everything off to a bare minimum so that they can run freely. Runners have a goal a focus for their running, no aimless running This is what the writer to the Hebrews is telling us. The course has been set from the very foundation of the world. We are all in a race and every race is the same but running is common to all. It says to **Throw off, strip off** everything that will hold us down or impair our running and if that is sin our lives then we ought to strip ourselves of that too.

Some of us have been running and running but have never got anywhere because of all the baggage we are running with. Often we love to hold on to baggage even though we know we should not, we love to hold on our sinful life styles although we know should not.

What is sin? 1 John3:4-6 All who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless, for sin is a major disruption of God's order. Surely you know that Christ showed up in order to get rid of sin. There is no sin in him, and sin is not part of his program. No one who lives deeply in Christ makes a practice of sin. None of those who do practice sin have taken a good look at Christ. They've got him all backwards, don't know Jesus or understand him.

Sin means "to miss the mark." The mark, in this case, is the standard of perfection established by God and evidenced by Jesus. Viewed in that light, it is clear that we are all sinners. *Rom 3:23 Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory.*

Hence it is vital that we take heed to Gods word and His standards and get rid of all hindrances if we want to win in 2018. One cannot keep doing the same old thing and expect a different outcome!

The fact is that we are running a course that has been marked out for us, so let us run this race looking unto Jesus because that's the only way we are guaranteed a winning finish.

Don't allow the old to keep you from the new. Sometimes, in order to step into the new you have to throw off the old... and that can be painful, but worth it. Jesus endured the cross- it was painful for Him yet he did it because of the joy set before him of seeing people set free. That's why Jesus stepped out of eternity and stepped into humanity, became just like us so that He could win in life for us. This is why looking to Jesus will enable us to be winners through the challenges of life. Everyone faces challenges in sometime or another but we all have a choice when challenged and that is either to run away from it or overcome it.

What does it mean "To live is Christ?"

"To live is Christ" means that we proclaim the gospel of Christ. His message was constant: "*Jesus Christ and him crucified*" *1 Cor 2:2*. He brought the message of Christ's sacrifice to everybody both Jews and Gentiles, men and women. He would preach to literally anyone who would listen.

Let's proclaim Christ in 2018!

“To live is Christ” means that we imitate the example of Christ. Paul imitated Christ. He said in *1 Cor 11:1 follow me as I follow Christ...* Let us endeavour to imitate Jesus and do what He would do in 2018.

“To live is Christ” means that we pursue the knowledge of Christ. We want to know Christ better and better each day. Not just a set of facts about Christ, but Christ Himself. Many today know a lot of facts about Jesus but they don't know Him personally. Jesus is a personal God and friend. Philip 3:10-11

Let us work hard at getting to know Jesus more in 2018.

To live is Christ” means that we are willing to give up anything that prevents us from having Christ. How much are we willing to give up for Jesus? Ungodly ventures and behaviours. Righteousness and sin don't intermingle. Paul put it this way in *Philippians 3:7-9 The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness.*

Let's give up anything that gets in the way of Jesus in 2018.

“To live is Christ” means that Christ is our focus, our goal, and our chief desire. Christ is the centre point of our mind, heart, body and soul. Everything that we do, we do for Christ's glory. As we run the *“race marked out for us,”* we lay aside the entangling sin and worldly distractions, *“fixing our eyes on Jesus”* Heb 12:1-2.

He is our life. Let's focus on the living and let's Live in Christ and run to win in 2018.

Let's leave 2017 behind with its old habits and failures and let's focus to being winners in 2018.