

KINGDOM PURSUIT: STRIVE

LESSON 1: STRIVING OR STRUGGLING

Phil. 3:14; Luke 13:24; Phil. 4:13

STRIVING OR STRUGGLING: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

- ❖ Striving and struggling can look the same and are similar with a difference:
 - Both involve effort, difficulty, and challenges. The difference we are considering is what directs our effort and whose strength we depend upon.
 - Striving: the act or practice of trying hard to do, reach, or achieve something (Dictionary.com)
 - Struggling: to contend with an adversary or opposing force (Dictionary.com)
 - Struggles don't necessarily mean a lack of faith – 2 Cor. 4:8–9, 16–18
- ❖ Struggling often asks, “How do I get through this?” but striving also asks, “What am I pressing toward?”
 - We need to consider where our efforts are taking us – Prov. 4:25–27

STRIVING HAS AN ULTIMATE GOAL – Phil. 3:14

- ❖ Do not get stuck in past failures – 1 John 1:9; Phil. 3:13–14
- ❖ Do not get stuck in past accomplishments – Phil. 3:12–13; Luke 9:23
- ❖ Keep reaching – Phil. 3:13; 2 Pet. 1:5–8; Gal. 6:9
- ❖ Keep the goal in mind – Heb. 12:1–2; Col. 3:1–2

STRIVING REQUIRES FOCUS – Luke 13:23-24

- ❖ Jesus identifies the entrance His hearers must seek – the strait gate
 - Every path does not lead to life – Matt. 7:13–14
 - Christ Himself is the way to the Father – John 14:6
- ❖ Familiarity with spiritual things is not enough – Luke 13:25–27
 - Being around the Word is different from receiving and obeying it – James 1:21–22
 - We must examine ourselves instead of just having religious activity – 2 Cor. 13:5; Matt. 7:21–23
- ❖ Focus requires a timely response – Luke 13:25; Heb. 3:15; 2 Cor. 6:2
 - Salvation is God's gift through faith, not a reward for works – Eph. 2:8–9

STRIVING CAN BECOME A STRUGGLE WHEN WE DEPEND UPON OUR OWN STRENGTH – Phil. 4:11-13

- ❖ We become burdened when we act as though everything depends upon us.
 - We cannot produce spiritual fruit apart from Christ – John 15:4–5
 - Too much of your thoughts will wreck your life – Prov. 3:5–6
 - We can't even serve if He doesn't give us the ability to serve – 2 Cor. 3:5
- ❖ Depending upon Christ does not remove our responsibility to act.
 - We work because God is working in us – Phil. 2:12–13
 - Prayer and dependence should accompany our effort – Eph. 6:18

- ❖ God's strength meets us in our weakness.
 - His grace is sufficient – 2 Cor. 12:9–10
 - We can bring our burdens to Him – 1 Pet. 5:7
 - Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength – Isa. 40:29–31

THE ENEMY WANTS THE STRUGGLE TO STOP YOUR STRIVING

- ❖ The enemy often attacks while we are struggling.
 - He seeks opportunities to undermine our faith and draw us away from obeying God – 1 Pet. 5:8–9
 - We must remain watchful when we are tired, discouraged, or overwhelmed – Matt. 26:41
- ❖ The enemy wants the immediate struggle to make us forget the ultimate goal.
 - He wants what we are going through to consume our attention until we lose sight of what we are striving for – Mark 4:18–19; Heb. 12:2–3
- ❖ The enemy gains ground when the struggle causes us to abandon our pursuit.
 - Discouragement can lead us to stop serving, stop growing, or stop doing what God has called us to do.
 - We are warned against drawing back and called to persevere in faith – Heb. 10:35–39
 - We can't allow weariness to make us give up doing good – Gal. 6:9
- ❖ Remembering what we are striving for helps us stand through the struggle.
 - Paul endured affliction while keeping eternal things in view – 2 Cor. 4:16–18
 - We resist the enemy by remaining steadfast in the faith – 1 Pet. 5:9; James 4:7
 - We keep pressing toward the mark, depending upon Christ for strength – Phil. 3:14; 4:13

The enemy wants to take you out in the struggle. Do not let what you are going through make you forget what you are striving for.

MOVING BEYOND MERE SURVIVAL

- ❖ Identify what you are pressing toward.
 - What would obedience, growth, and faithfulness look like in this season of your life? – Phil. 3:12–14
- ❖ Recognize what is holding your attention.
 - Are past failures, past accomplishments, or present concerns keeping you from reaching forward? – Phil. 3:13; Luke 10:41–42
- ❖ Examine whose strength you are relying upon.
 - Are you seeking Christ's direction and strength, or trying to carry everything yourself? – John 15:5; Phil. 4:13
- ❖ Take the next faithful step.
 - You may not be able to resolve every difficulty today, but you can respond to what God has placed before you – James 1:22; Gal. 6:9