

Rooted 2021 Student Devotional: God Finishes What He Starts **by Anna Meade Harris**

I'd like to describe myself as an ambitious, creative idea girl. I can dream up short stories and insightful articles, talks I would give my Bible study group, and designs for the flower beds in my yard. I browse yarn stores with plans for hand-making beautiful Christmas gifts; I buy blank journals and compile quotes to make personalized journals for my friends. I daydream about repainting bedrooms in my house, sewing new throw pillows, and rearranging furniture.

But piles of yarn and fabric and unplanted seed packets clutter my closets. My computer contains an embarrassing number of documents started, abandoned, and forgotten. It's fair to say that I am an "idea girl," but it's truthful to say that most of my ideas never make it from concept to concrete.

I have a tiny problem with follow-through.

While it's disappointing not to see my projects through, my efforts to reform my own heart and attitudes are far more important and even less successful. I would like to have better self-control, but I find myself buying things I don't need and saying things I know are not helpful or loving. I would like to be kinder and more patient, but I am judgmental and irritable with the same people in my life nearly every day. I confess, I repent – sometimes I am so sorry I cry! – and I repeat the same-old-sins *again*. Some days I think there's no evidence that I am one bit different than when Jesus saved me when I was eight years old.

That's why I think Philippians 1:6 is some of the very best news in Scripture. Writing to encourage the beloved church at Phillippi, Paul says: "*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.*"

What does this mind-blowing verse mean?

He began with an idea and a plan when he created each human being in his image.

The work he is doing in you and in me is *good*.

Because he is God, he has the power and the desire and the ability to bring his work in us to its completion.

Without rushing or shortcuts, God finishes what he starts.

God has ZERO problem with follow-through.

Even more exciting, Romans 8:29 gives us a peek into the good work God is doing. We are to be "conformed to the image of his son." In other words, he is making us like Jesus. Because Jesus died in our place on the cross, taking the punishment our sin deserved, we are given his righteousness so that with God, it's as if we never sinned at all. But God is not simply content to *give* us the righteousness of Christ (wonderful as that is!), God is also going to transform us into Jesus' image, so that "at the day of Christ Jesus" we will actually *be* righteous like Jesus!

According to Philippians 1:6 this transformation of you and me into people who really love like Jesus and act like Jesus is not ultimately our responsibility – it's God's! This means I can let go of my efforts to reform my own heart. I rely instead on God to help me follow through in obedience to his Word because I don't have the will or the strength to obey him without his help. Out of a growing love for him, I gratefully cooperate with his good work in changing me. He can and will see it through.

So when I think about all the things I don't like about myself, all the sins I keep repeating, all the ways I fail God, fail myself, fail the people I love – it's okay, because God is not done with me. He's not done with you, either, because neither one of us looks like Jesus—yet. But we will, and that's a promise we can count on.