

CONVERSATION GUIDE:

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What's one thing you were passionate about (or "laser-focused") as a child? What made you pursue it so intensely?
- What's been the most challenging or surprising part of this year for you so far?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Read Philippians 3:10-14. What specific things does Paul want to "know" or experience according to verse 10?
- According to verse 12, what's Paul's motivation for pressing on? What does "Christ Jesus has made me his own" mean?
- In verse 13, Paul mentions "one thing I do." What are the two parts of this "one thing"?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- Do you have a "spiritual ferocity?" Are you a spiritual "laser beam?" How would you honestly answer this?
- Paul balances remembering his past failures with gratitude for grace. How can reflecting on past sin increase our appreciation for Jesus and His word?
- What "weights" might you need to rest upon Jesus rather than carrying them yourself (failures, successes, fears, plans)?
- John Paton's definition of faith is "leaning heavily upon Christ." What areas of your life do you need to lean more heavily on Jesus?
- Paul says in verse 13: "one thing I do." If someone observed your life, what would they say your "one thing" is? What needs to change for Jesus to be your clear focus?
- Identify one area where you're living in either legalism (trying to earn God's approval) or license (using grace as an excuse). How can you move toward Gospel-driven living?

GROUP FOCUS:

- Jim emphasized community (Gospel Communities) as essential for spiritual growth. What specific step could you take to go deeper in Christian community?



WEEK 26 THE JOY OF SPIRITUAL LASER BEAMS (PHILIPPIANS 3:10-14)

TODAY'S VERSES:

Philippians 3:10-14 Philippians 1:6
Philippians 3:4-8 Philippians 3:20-21
1 Timothy 1:12-17

JULY 27, 2025

WEEK 26 THE JOY OF SPIRITUAL LASER BEAMS

2025, like most years, hasn't been easy. Yet God remains at work—we may have been "roughed up," but in His hands, we are neither forgotten nor abandoned.

Paul wrote Philippians while imprisoned in conditions of unspeakable horror: overcrowded prisons with suffocating air, sleepless nights in chains, underground chambers devoid of light, corroding iron shackles, and appalling filth. Yet Paul wasn't deterred by these devastating circumstances. Instead, he found something far more devastating: the life he used to live before Christ.

Paul demonstrates three key principles: **what he left behind, what he pressed toward, and how we can follow his example.**

1. What Paul Left Behind: Paul's former life was built on an impressive religious résumé, but Paul's encounter with Jesus changed everything. He didn't need "modern upgrades"—he needed complete renovation. In Phil. 3:7-8, he declares that whatever gain he had, he "counted as loss for the sake of Christ" because of "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

We must abandon two errors:

Legalism—trying to earn God's approval through obedience rather than responding in love to grace already given. The Gospel reminds us that we'll never obey perfectly; God must come to us.

License—using grace as freedom to sin rather than freedom to obey as a response to Christ's work.

Paul's transformation wasn't from legalism to license but from legalism to Gospel. Righteousness isn't something we do—it's something Jesus does, and we receive.

2. What Paul Pressed Toward: Paul's goal was singular: "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection" (verse 10). The word "press" is the same Greek word for "persecute"—deliberately violent language showing this isn't casual Christianity but "spiritual ferocity" and "holy violence."

"The Christian life is caused by and results in a spiritual ferocity, a spiritual laser beam. There's a laser beam that causes your Christianity, and then a laser beam is what you become." - Tim Keller

The motivation? "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (verse 12). Jesus loves us with ferocious love, pressing toward us as "the joy set before him." Now we press toward knowing Him because He first pressed toward knowing us.

3. How We Follow Paul's Example: Missionary John Paton, facing cannibals in the South Pacific, discovered the perfect translation for "faith" when he heard someone cry, "Please, may I come and lean heavily upon you?" Faith is leaning heavily upon Christ.

This leaning results in grace-driven effort, Gospel grittiness, and spiritual ferocity. Are there weights you haven't rested upon Jesus? Paul counts all fleshly accomplishments as nothing. Both failures and successes will crush us if they stay on our shoulders, but in Christ, failures are covered by His death and successes empowered by His resurrection.

The most important thing we can do is know Jesus—through Scripture, prayer, Gospel Community, and complete surrender of our lives to Him.

"Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (verses 20-21). Despite who Paul once was, Jesus sought him out and saved him. Now his concern isn't earning righteousness, but pressing to know God.

We are on a journey toward the restoration of all things. Let us press on, letting our lives be a response to the glorious gift we've received.