

Magnify Light

As a young boy, I discovered the power of focus through the gift of a magnifying glass.

I think it was a science experiment for school. You've probably tried the same test. I held the glass close to a fallen maple leaf and directed the sun's rays through the lens.

A small, bright dot appeared on the leaf. Within just a few seconds, it began to burn from the intensity of the targeted sunlight.

Light has amazing power. When amplified and focused, its power multiplies in increments difficult to measure.

The apostle Paul could not have foreseen the laser beam and the way it gathers and concentrates light as a tool to impact our lives. But he did understand focus.

"I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Phil. 3:12-14, NLT).

Paul was probably the first Christian leader to teach the concept of spiritual focus. In the middle of verse 13, he says it clearly, *"I focus on this one thing."*

A single candle illuminates a dark passageway. One light bulb spreads light in every direction at once. The flip of a switch brightens an entire room.

We gather laser light and send it in one direction. The power

of intense focus occurs when we gather a broad spectrum of a base component and forcefully push it toward a single point. Power.

Consider Jesus' laser-like prayer in a time of deep need: "And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44, MEV).

Could it be that earnest prayer generates more focused light than general petitions such as "Oh, Lord, bless me, bless me, bless me"?

When Jesus' disciples whined about their lack of efficacy in ministry, He prescribed a laser: "He said to them, 'This kind cannot come out except by prayer and fasting'" (Mark 9:29).

In our passage from Philippians, Paul speaks about the gathering of light. "I press on to possess that perfection" (v. 12). In verse 14, He repeats the phrase "press on."

He doesn't sound diffused or confused but rather infused with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We might call Paul an experienced gatherer. He sought to gather the entire church and pound them to death. He pressed on with a passion to eliminate Christians from Judea. His focus led to the lethal persecution of many followers of Jesus. But on the road to Damascus, God permanently altered Paul's vision. He saw a gathered light that drew him to Jesus. In an instant, he wanted to spend the remainder of his life doing nothing but teaching Gentiles about the bright light that radically changed the direction and intensity of his focus.

Our Spirit-led life arises from and results in a spiritual ferocity that cannot be diffused. The laser beam leads us to pursue God with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our mind. The beam of light drew us in and now points the way.

The Holy Spirit says, “Come,” and then quickly says, “Go.”

When we gather light, our prayer life changes. Our hunger for His presence intensifies. Our desire to “be like Him” pervades each moment.

Look again at Philippians 3:13b: “I focus on this one thing,” or “I’m after one thing now.”

Paul was not easily distracted and moved about by shiny objects. His intensity was Spirit-breathed and Spirit-led. We can find no substitute or replacement for the purity of God’s light. Every other option for our time and worries, as the old hymn reminds us, “grows strangely dim.”

Paul gathered his energy for one thing. His focus is a model for the distracted. Many of us live each day with diffused energy. We may shed some light, but we rarely walk, pray or serve with laser focus.

May we not spread our focus over what matters least. Let us gather energy to focus our light in passionate pursuit of the Holy Spirit.

STEVE GREENE is the publisher and executive vice president of the media group at Charisma Media and executive producer of the Charisma Podcast Network. Find his book, *Love Leads: The Spiritual Connection Between Your Relationships and Productivity*, at [www.charismamedia.com](#), or at your local bookstore.

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