

What if... We Really Knew Jesus?

Philippians 3:1-9

PPT Title

What if We Really Knew Jesus?

Main Point: Knowing Jesus is the most important thing there is.

Key Verse: *I consider everything to be nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. To know Him is the best thing of all.* - Philippians 3:8a

Props: Backpack, hammer, hair clip, brick, lamp that can fit partially into backpack; A really nice crown, an over-sized T-shirt that is ripped up, dirty, with sin words on it

INTRO/BACKGROUND

Let me see your most joyful face. Let me see your least joyful face. We are about halfway through Paul's letter to his friends in Philippi. He really loves these folks and he wants them to have the most JOY-filled lives possible. Since he can't go visit them, he's been writing down the most important things he can think of.

TIMOTHY



Paul continues his letter by saying: *Finally, my brothers and sisters, be joyful because you belong to the Lord. It is no trouble for me to write about some important matters to you again. If you know about them, you will have a safe path to follow.* - Philippians 3:1

Paul has written these things before but he didn't mind writing them again so that more and more people could read them and have the most joy.



In the next verse, Paul said to "Watch out" for certain people. These guys did not live joyfully. They were religious, but they didn't know God's heart. Paul didn't say their names, but he said they insisted that people follow a bunch of rules instead of relying on God (Philippians 3:2). Can you think of anyone like that in the Bible? The Pharisees lived like that. Jesus Himself spoke against these guys. Jesus said that their hearts were far away from God (Mark 7:6-7). He said, *"They tie up heavy loads and put them on other people's shoulders. But they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them."* (Matthew 23:4)

Let's see what He means by that. **Call up a volunteer. Have him put on an empty backpack.** One of God's rules is to rest on the Sabbath. That means, one day every week, we should stop working and spend our time worshipping God and praising Him for the way He provides for us. That's a great rule: Rest and focus on God. However, the Pharisees turned it into something completely different.

Hold up a hammer. What is this for? People use it for work, to build furniture or maybe a house. So, on the day of rest, you shouldn't use a hammer to work. Well, the Pharisees went a step further. They said you can't move a hammer from one spot to another. In fact, you can't even TOUCH a hammer on the Sabbath. That was the hammer rule. **Put it in the backpack.** And, ladies, it was okay to wear a hair clip on the Sabbath, but you couldn't carry it in your hand. Which means, I guess, you'd have

to put it in your hair the night before! **Put it in the backpack.** And you better not touch a brick on the Sabbath, since bricks are used for building. But, then, how do you walk on a brick road? **Put the brick in the backpack.** There were rules against turning on a light on the Sabbath. **Put the lamp in the backpack.** I could fill this over and over. These men turned God's one good rule into thousands of impossible-to-follow rules.

Ask volunteer: What if it was up to you to keep every law—THOUSANDS of laws—perfectly, all the time, every day? Doesn't that sound like a heavy burden? Does that sound like a joyful life? No! It sounds miserable. Everywhere you turned, you'd be failing at something. Following rules will not make anyone right with God. Today, we don't follow the Pharisees' rules, but what are some rules people try to follow to be right with God? (go to church, give to poor) Those are great things, but no one can do these things perfectly all the time. It is actually impossible for us (Romans 3:20).

That's why Paul was SO excited to tell people about Jesus! Paul said that because of what Jesus did, "God's grace has set us free from the law." (Romans 6: 14-15) **Remove the backpack and thank your volunteer.**

PAUL'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Before he met Jesus, Paul's accomplishments, his rule-keeping (his backpack) looked pretty impressive. He was the best Pharisee rule-keeper there was. Paul's dad was a Pharisee and Paul even went to Pharisee school (Acts 22:3, 23:6). He used to love the rules and he thought following them was the most important thing he could do. But after He met Jesus, everything changed. Paul said:

I have many reasons to trust in my human nature. Others may think they have reasons to trust in theirs. But I have even more... I am part of the people of Israel. I am from the tribe of Benjamin. I am a pure Hebrew. As far as the law is concerned, I am a Pharisee. As far as being committed is concerned, I opposed and attacked the church. As far as keeping the Law is concerned, I kept it perfectly.

PPT Key Verse

I thought things like that were for my benefit. But now I consider them to be nothing because of Christ. Even more, I consider everything to be nothing compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. To know him is the best thing of all. Because of him I have lost everything. But I consider all of it to be garbage so I can get to know Christ. I want to be joined to Him.

For me, being right with God does not come from the law. It comes because I believe in Christ. It comes from God. It is received by faith. - Philippians 3:4-9

Back when Paul was following the Pharisees' rules, he was missing the heart of God. He didn't believe in Jesus. He hurt and arrested people who followed Jesus. But then Paul came face to face with the risen Jesus!

THE AMAZING TRADE



What are some things that people trade? A few years ago, kids were really into "silly bands." Those things came in every shape! There were animal shapes, and music notes, and cowboy shapes... If you had a rare shape, and we wanted to trade, then I might have to give you 3 or 4 of mine to make the trade "fair." What are some other things that people trade? Baseball cards, Pokemon cards, etc.



Okay, keeping the idea of "trading" in mind, here's what Jesus did. He said: I am perfect. I have kept every single law of God 100% perfectly for all of time. I have no sin. So I deserve to live forever. I don't ever have to be separated from My Father. I get eternal life, great rewards, and honor forever. **Place a crown on your head.**

Quickly, quietly, pull up a volunteer. Here's what you have. **Put the ripped up sin shirt on your volunteer.** You have sin (Not on the outside, but deep down in your heart).

You haven't been perfect. You deserve to carry the weight of that around forever. You deserve death (Romans 6:23) and separation from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Then Jesus says: I know... Let's trade!

Jesus offers to take your punishment, your sin, your separation from God; He wants to give you His inheritance, His honor, His rewards, and eternal life! If you trust in Him, this is what happens: **Trade the crown for the shirt!** Is that a *fair* trade? No! It's an AMAZING trade! Then Jesus took our sin and destroyed it! (1 John 3:8) Remove shirt, wad up and toss it away. Everyone who believes in Jesus gets the great things that Jesus deserves. We are adopted into God's family and treated like His sons and daughters!

KNOWING JESUS

When Jesus offered to make that amazing trade with Paul, Paul jumped at the chance! From that day on, Paul thought, "Man, nothing else in all the world can be as good as this! I want to know Jesus more and more! (Philippians 3:10-11) What kind of a guy would do this for a sinner like me?! (1 Timothy 1:15) All the stuff I've spent my life seeking after is like TRASH compared to Jesus! Knowing Jesus is the most important thing there is.

PPT Main Point



Knowing someone is a lot different from knowing about someone. Who can tell me something about Martin Luther King, Jr? (Option: Choose a current celebrity the kids would all know a lot about.) Ok, those things are all true. You know a lot about him. You may even know some of the words he said. That's great. But did any of you really *know* him? What made him laugh? What made him cry? Was he patient with his children? Was he nervous before he gave a big speech? These are all things you would know if you really knew him—if you spent time with him, traveled with him, and had one-on-one conversations with him.



Paul wanted this kind of relationship with Jesus. He wanted to know what made Jesus smile and what made him cry. He wanted to know what Jesus thought about everything, so he could think like Jesus. Of course, in any relationship, time together is KEY! Sometimes that will be time alone with God, reading His word and asking, "Hey Jesus, how does this apply to me today?" Sometimes it's quiet prayers—just you and Him.

But another great way you get to know someone is by becoming interested in the things that they are interested in. (Leader, share a story of something you became interested in for the sake of a friend or loved one. For example, a wife that begins to watch football. Tell how having experiences in that together deepened the relationship.) So, if you want to know Jesus, do what He did! Care about the things He cares about!



What does Jesus care about? He loves kids, telling people about His Kingdom, the poor, those who are treated unfairly, and lots more.

Paul definitely spent quiet time talking and listening to Jesus, and studying God's word. But Paul really got to know Jesus deeper when Paul was out on a mission for Jesus. No matter what crazy situation Paul got into, Jesus' Spirit was with him.

And here's the cool thing: The more Paul *knew* Jesus, the more his actions looked just like Jesus. So there he was, going around keeping all of God's good rules. Because that good stuff was in his heart, it's what naturally flowed out! That's what happens with us too. When you *know* Jesus, you'll *think* like Him and then you'll *act* like Him (John 15:5). It won't be a heavy weight of rules you "have to" keep. It'll be the things you *want* to do. Jesus said, "Become my servants and learn from me. I am gentle and free of pride. You will find rest for your souls. Serving Me is easy, and my load is light." (Matthew 11:29-30) Focus on *knowing Jesus* and He'll take care of the rest!