

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

## Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 01.10.2021

### A WORD OF GREAT HOPE – ACTS 9:26-31

#### Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Jesus turns things around. We need that kind of Hope and Expectancy about our world, our family, our work, and our personal life – that Jesus Turns things around! One of the most devastating feelings in our lives is fatalism – the feeling that this is the way it is always going to be from now on and nothing is going to change and that is that. It has been this way for so long it is just Not going to change. It will probably even get worse. The message of the Book of Acts is that “fatalism” is Not True! The Messiah Jesus is not dead, and He is not distant, and He is not silent and He is not weak! He is full of Surprises for congregations, for nations, for families and for individuals! We have seen in Acts 8-9 persecution of believers after the murder of Stephen. Imagine if you are in the early Church with no legal protection and all the power structures hostile to you. Would you not be tempted to murmur and complain and feel fatalistic? But God is not predictable. Life is not a machine. Life is drama, and here is a Living Author-Director named Jesus who can and does jump into our world any time He wants. Suddenly, out of the blue, He takes the Key Player of the persecution of the early Church and turns him totally around on the Damascus Road. Let's get into our study...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most or spoke to you from Pastor Ray's message this last weekend?
2. Describe the most bold thing someone you know has done. Why was it a bold move? What did it accomplish? How did your opinion of that person change after he/she exhibited boldness?
3. Do you consider yourself a bold person? What's the boldest thing you've ever done for God? How would you describe your relationship with Him at that time?

#### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

##### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 9:26-27

1. Why did the Jerusalem Christians fear Paul? How do you think you would have reacted to Paul if you had been there?
2. How did Jesus change Paul's life? Look back at Acts 9:1-18 for the story of Paul's conversion.

The Jerusalem Christians' fear of Paul was understandable. He had been present at Stephen's death and had sought to arrest Christians. In fact, when he later gave his testimony, he described how he had imprisoned many Jesus followers and voted for the death sentence for others (Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-10). If Paul was only pretending to act like a disciple, he could've destroyed the church.

3. Why was Barnabas willing to stand up for Paul? What was Barnabas risking by doing so?
4. Who has taken a risk on you? Who gave you your first opportunity to serve Jesus? What was the result?
5. How would things have been different if Barnabas hadn't been there to stand up for Paul?

## Visitation/Restoration in 2021

6. **When do we need to take risks either to include others in community or to lead them to greater devotion or service in Christ? What impact would more Barnabas-like boldness have on our community?**

### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 9:28-31

As a result of Barnabas's defense, the apostles accepted Paul into their fellowship, and they opened doors of opportunity for him to minister and spread the gospel in Jerusalem. Boldness characterized Paul's evangelism.

1. **How were Paul and Barnabas's acts of boldness similar? How were they different?**
2. **What are some synonyms for "bold" that might help us better understand Paul's testimony about Jesus?**
3. **What characteristics of Paul's ministry were evident in the beginning (vv. 29-30)? Based on what you know about Paul from the New Testament, how prominent were these traits in his lifelong ministry?**

The Greek word translated "spoken" boldly stresses Paul's confidence in his new faith. To speak in the name of Jesus meant to speak with His authority. God opened Paul's eyes to see how the Old Testament Scriptures spoke of Jesus. Paul was able to use that theological truth powerfully and confidently to express his faith.

4. **Read Ephesians 6:19-20. Based on these verses, do you think Paul struggled to be bold in his faith? Why or why not?**
5. **Read Acts 9:31 again. What was happening in the church during this time? Which of these do we most need to experience in our city? How might we boldly help make it a reality?**

Acts 9:31 ends the account of Paul's conversion. With that watershed event, the early persecution of Christians also ended. The church experienced peace, the Spirit's encouragement, and numerical growth. May the Lord grant us numerical growth in our Growth Groups throughout San Diego and the world!

### Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

**Saul had not gone to Jerusalem to preach, but to see Peter. In fact, it was dangerous for Saul to be there right now. So why is Saul found preaching? 1) Because he could not keep quiet! 2) he still felt guilt over Stephen's death ached over those he incited to murder him. Being in Jerusalem gave him the opportunity to go back and confess his wrong and proclaim Messiah Jesus to them. But they became infuriated and determined to kill him. The Major theme here is Saul's unwavering faithfulness to Jesus despite the trials. Jesus turned Saul the persecutor around. Do you think He can turn your situation around?**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

1. Why do you think God values risk? What do we communicate to God when we take risks, like both Barnabas and Paul, to make His name known?
2. What barriers keep us from sharing the gospel with boldness? If we are not demonstrating boldness in our faith, what should we ask ourselves?
3. How does a person become a witness with "complete boldness"?
4. What are some practical steps toward boldness that you can take today? How can we encourage and support one another to live sent with boldness?

## ***Visitation/Restoration in 2021***

PRAYER - Ask God for the courage to take risks and a greater awareness of the need to be dependent on Him. Pastor Ray encouraged that in the face of all that's going on in our country, we are not to turn to the left or to the right but to stand still and see the salvation of God. Trust that God is in control of our situation and He has a blessed and good plan for each of us.

*"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.." (Eccl. 12:13)*

**Here are the two videos Pastor Ray spoke about:**

1. Don Piper, 90 Minutes in Heaven - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LyZoNlKnMM>
2. Bill Weis the man who spent 23 minutes in hell - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKniy8CCKgs&t=148s>

**Heaven and Hell are real, and the Gospel still saves any who will call on His name!**