

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 11.29.2020

A LIFE CHANGING EXPERIENCE – ACTS 9:1-9

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.

Have you ever known someone you think will never become a Christian? They may go out of their way to embarrass you or mock you, as if they live to make your life miserable. Welcome to a fitting description of Saul of Tarsus. He who was dedicated to the destruction of the Church now turns 180 degrees to be dedicated to bringing the Gospel to the Whole World. It was so unexpected that many in the early Church did not believe it even after it had truly happened! Young Saul of Tarsus, the Enemy, Persecutor and relentless pursuer of Christians is now pursued by Jesus Christ. He is after many these days! After Saul's conversion, he blazed a trail that left behind many Churches and disciples. He preached to Pharisees, philosophers, soldiers, sorcerers, slaves, servants, governors and Kings, and even Caesar himself! Oh how God used this man! God is in the life-changing business and He can take any life and transform it into something beautiful. 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. Saul's life was about to take a major and radical change. Why do you think that people are so afraid of change?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 1:1-2

1. What was Saul's overall attitude toward Christianity before his conversion? Read Acts 8:1-3 for additional insight.
2. What efforts did Saul go to in order to persecute Christians (vs. 9:1-2)?
3. What explanations can you give for Saul's fanatic hatred toward Christians?

Saul was a highly educated Pharisee. He sat at the feet of the best teachers including Gamaliel, one of the greatest Hebrew intellectuals of the time. He was a Hellenistic Jew who was fluent in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. Highly committed to the Pharisaical law, Paul despised this new sect of Judaism who called themselves Christ followers known as "The Way."

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ALL THREE ACCOUNTS OF PAUL'S CONVERSION - Acts 9:3-9, 22:6-11, 26:12-18.

1. Why did Jesus ask, "Why are you persecuting me?" (9:4)?

Everything was wrapped up in that one question. There was authority, judgment, penetration, grace and urgency? Just as Christ had done so often with others, He was piercing the heart of Saul and asking the perfect question that would cut to the very soul. Jesus was causing Saul to question the very essence of everything he stood for and everything he was doing. He was declaring to Saul that in persecuting His church, he was persecuting Jesus himself.

Prepare! in 2020

2. How is persecuting the church the same as persecuting Jesus? What is the significance of this?
3. What did Jesus mean when He asked Saul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (26:14)?
4. What did Pastor Ray say about goads and what are they used for? Has the Lord ever had to use a goad in your life? Explain...
5. What question did Saul ask in response to Jesus (Acts 22:10)?

Trembling and astonished, Saul asked the question, "What should I do Lord?" At that moment, Saul understood the authority of the one to whom he was speaking. At that moment he knew this Jesus was definitely alive and had full authority over everything. That question "What should I do Lord?" would be the question that Paul would live by for the rest of his life. In every challenge and circumstance, that is the question for Christians to ask, "What should I do Lord?"

6. Why do you think Paul was blinded and forced to go to Damascus in that condition?

He was being taught already that he was to be completely obedient and dependent on the grace of God. The Holy Spirit could have dealt him the same fate as Ananias and Sapphira but instead he was being extended grace for God's purpose. He was being taught humility and preparing for the suffering he would endure for Christ.

7. What are some things that Saul might have thought about during the remainder of his trip?

Applying God's Word

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

Saul's conversion is an example of how Israel will be saved when Jesus Christ returns and reveals Himself. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus the leading persecutor of Christians is perhaps the greatest event in church history after the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. For the next great event would be the conversion of the Gentiles around the world, God making One New Man of Jew and Gentile forming His body, the Church. Hallelujah!

1. What in your past makes it hard for you to feel worthy of serving God? How does the gospel impact those feelings? How has your past prepared you to minister to people today?
2. How can you use your story to serve in the church and community? How can your past successes and failures help you glorify and serve God?
3. Who in our community can you connect with because of your story? What are some ways you can be intentional with people this week?
4. Your response should be like that of Paul, "What should I do Lord?"

PRAYER - Close in prayer asking that God would use your history and experience to bring Him glory and to expand His kingdom. Pray that He would reveal ways for your group to serve the church and the community. Pray that God would use your stories of life change to impact people in similar situations.

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." (Zech. 12:10)