

Title: **The Stories We Tell (Part 1): Breaking In**
Text: **Acts 9:1-20**
Date: **June 30, 2024**

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Big Idea

We all tell stories about ourselves to ourselves. We try to make sense of who we are, what we're about, and why we do what we do. But often these stories don't line up with the truths of God and his Word. In fact, many times these stories actually blind us to the true and better story God is trying to tell. Saul himself had been blinded by such a story. But Jesus, in his grace, interrupts him. May he do the same for us!

1. Vain Imaginings

There's a real danger with the stories we tell ourselves. Sometimes we weave the narrative so tightly around us, that it actually starts to block our eyes. We don't see things the way they really are anymore. We're not open to it, because it threatens our self-image, our self-worth. And if ever someone does try to come and say: "Hey I don't think that's right," or "Your story isn't true"—like Stephen did (in a roundabout way) with Paul—we plug our ears, we gnash our teeth, we rush at the naysayers—we kill them if we have to.

And, you know, we're all prone to this sort of thing in one way or another. We tell ourselves stories that, perhaps unbeknownst to us, keep us at a distance from God, because they keep us from facing the honest truth about him and about ourselves. I don't know what it may be for you. But I do know what you need if you're ever going to get out of it: You need an intervention. You need a collision with the truth, something that will jar you enough that you wake up and you're willing to face it. In other words, you need Jesus to break in!

2. Bright Confrontations

So here Paul is struck blind by the light. He's sitting in the darkness. But what do you think is happening with him in these moments? He's rethinking God—"Maybe I missed something about YHWH in the Scriptures. Maybe things have been pointing to Jesus all along." He's

rethinking himself—"Maybe I'm not as righteous as I imagine myself to be. Maybe I truly am on the wrong side of this. Maybe instead of serving God, I've been opposing him." He's rethinking the story he's been telling. He's starting to see. But more than that, did you notice? He's starting to pray (v. 11).

This is how God always works. He interrupts the false, self-serving stories we're telling, he breaks in through the webs we're weaving, and he brings the truth in love. He knocks us down, blinds us if he has to, to help us see, to help us open up to him. It's disorienting at first. It's disruptive. But it's kindness. It's rescue. One of the sweetest things Jesus ever did for me was tear the idols from my hand, interrupt my self-oriented story-telling, and plunge me into darkness for a few days. It hurt like hell, but it readied me for heaven.

3. Open Eyes

"If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Phil. 3:4-12)



Reflection Questions

- Where would you say that, like Paul, you have been telling stories about yourself to yourself? How are you perhaps justifying or excusing things you know don't line up with God and his Word? Why do we do this? How can Jesus and the gospel help?

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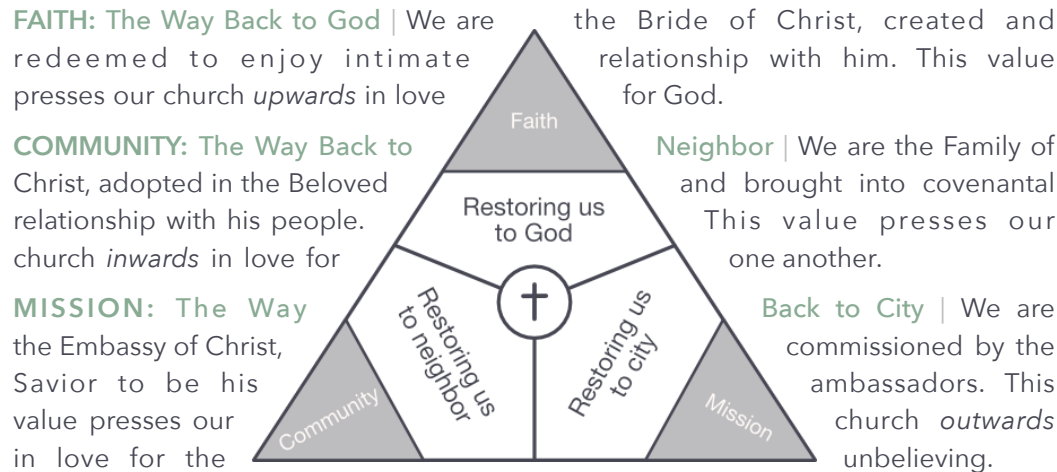


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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

All Church Campout - Registration Is Now Live!

We are excited to announce that we'll be hosting an All Church Campout at Mount Madonna County Park over the weekend of August 2nd-4th! We have a huge group campsite all to ourselves and lots of options in the park for having fun together. Whether you love to camp or you'd rather still sleep in your own bed, we have something for everyone. Because the park is only a 45 minute drive from south San Jose, people can feel free to come and go as it works with their schedule and preference.

Option #1: Day-Use: For those not wanting to camp but still wanting to participate, the Day-Use option is best. You can come in for the day, enjoy activities, meals, etc., and then head home to your warm bed while the rest of us "rough" it :).

Option #2: Camp: This option is for those who want the full camping experience. We have the site for Friday and Saturday nights. You can choose to camp for one or both of these depending upon your availability and desire.

Scan the QR code below for more info and to find a link to sign up.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

Mercy Hill Kids Summer Park Days - This Tuesday!

Mercy Hill Men's BBQ Hangout and Tasting Tour - 7/13!

All Church Hangout - Next Sunday!

New Men's DNA Group - Frontline Men!

Scan the QR code below for more info!

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