

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question:

1. Have you ever had a sliding doors moment in your life?

Aim/Prayer: for confidence that God can work in the hardest of hearts.

Read: Acts 9:1-31

Questions about the passage:

1. Who is Saul? Why does he persecute Christians? See also Philippians 3:4-6.
2. How might Saul be persecuting Jesus?
3. What is the significance of Saul's blindness & what's God's purpose for Saul?
4. What do you notice or can we learn from verse 20-31?

Questions for us:

1. Is every conversion meant to be like Saul's? Why/why not?
2. Should all new believers start preaching?
3. How can Saul's conversion give us hope for other non-believers? Is there anyone particular this reminds you of in your life?
4. Consider 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. What does it look like to apply Saul/Paul's thinking to your own life?

Pray: through the passage, for each other, for Village Church and for our local community.

Homework: pray for someone who feels very hard towards God.

Remind: Invite people/buy tickets for Gingerbread events.

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The Book of Acts is all about what happened in the few years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In his final command, Jesus said to his followers, go and make disciples of all nations. So, that's what they do. But not alone. God's Holy Spirit is with them to grow his Church in number and in maturity.

This week, we read about another 'divine appointment' but this time, the person far from God is a Pharisee who has been persecuting God's people.

Questions about the passage:

- Who is Saul? Why does he persecute Christians? See also Philippians 3:4-6. Saul is the Apostle Paul (same person). He is a young but well respected Pharisee. He is zealous for God but misguided in his zeal. He persecutes Christians because he believes 'the Way' is a heretical sect.
- How might Saul be persecuting Jesus?
To persecute Jesus' people is to in some sense persecute Jesus himself. This is a natural understanding if Christians are 'in Christ'.
- What is the significance of Saul's blindness & what's God's purpose for Saul?
Saul's physical blindness is symbolic of his spiritual blindness. It is only when the Holy Spirit comes on him that the scales fall away. This is true, of all believers despite the often lack of physical accompaniment.
- What do you notice or can we learn from verse 20-31?
Encourage people to consider for themselves. Worth noticing things like there are seasons of persecution and seasons of peace. Also, that there are times and situations where it is right to flee persecution even as many others may choose to stay.

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Questions for us:

- *Is every conversion meant to be like Saul's? Why/why not?*

I imagine Paul's conversion to be rare even in the time of Acts. It can often feel in Acts that there is miraculous stuff happening all the time. But actually, lots of conversions are happening just like they do today - ordinary Christians telling people the good news. But, as we saw before, all conversions are like Paul's in that they require the work of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and ears to see and hear the good news about Jesus.

- *Should all new believers start preaching?*

I think it's worth seeing that Saul is a fairly unique character. Once he understands that Jesus is Messiah, all the training he has undertaken as a Pharisee and teacher becomes effective for Christian ministry. That may be true for some today. But for most, they don't know enough to teach, preach or debate effectively. However, new believers do often make the best bringers to places where others can hear the good news.

- *How can Saul's conversion give us hope for other non-believers? Is there anyone particular this reminds you of in your life?*

If you had asked Ananias or many of the other Christians who was the least likely to convert. They might have said Saul. You can see their surprise to find him believing. Encourage people to reflect on those who they might be tempted to write off.

- *Consider 1 Corinthians 15:9-10. What does it look like to apply Saul/Paul's thinking to your own life?*

Paul is obviously saddened by his life before the road to Damascus. Many of us have regrets also. But Paul reminds us that if God had wanted him to be different, he would have been. By the grace of God we are what we are. This allows him to walk in the freedom of forgiveness but also in the determination to live differently for Jesus.