

Small Group Questions | February 17, 2019

The Great Explorers — Paul Part 1

Acts 9:1–25

Context: Acts 7:58–9:25

Other Passages Referenced: Isa 11:1, 6, 10; Eze 1:22, 26; Deut 21:23; Acts 26; 2 Cor 4:6–10; Gal 6:2;

Sermon Recap: Saul was an explorer (one searching for and following God's direction) who was transformed by a humbling encounter with Jesus and help from a fellow disciple of Jesus. Paul moves from being a great persecutor of Christians to become a persecuted proclaimer of Jesus as the Christ. Real transformation in our lives is more likely to happen if we will create space for humbling encounters with Jesus and ask fellow disciples of Jesus for help.

Introductory Comments to Group Leaders:

Small Group Questions and Leader Resources

If your group follows the sermon topics, please encourage your group members to access some background info and the small group questions by clicking on "Small Group ?" on the church website. It looks like we also have a workable solution to help Small Group Leaders or those leading the discussion on a particular week to access expanded comments and resources on the website at the link <http://wcchapel.org/resources-for-small-group-leaders/>. Beginning the first Sunday in March, I plan to stop sending the emails with questions, since both group leaders and members can find respective resources on the website.

Service Opportunity –

Do you have a pick up truck? God's Moving One to One, a ministry of the Chapel, works with Grove Christian Outreach Center (GCOC) to collect donated furniture and appliances and make delivery to Grove clients. We typically use the Grove truck for our work but occasionally, we need a pick up truck to move one or two items. If you are willing to help, please contact Pamela Janaro at pamela.pp@cox.net or Mary Morrison at mb5morrison@gmail.com for more details and to volunteer your support. Thank you!

Meeting Prep

This week's time in the Scripture focuses on the conversion of Saul/Paul from persecutor of Christians to a disciple of Jesus who becomes a persecuted proclaimer of the gospel.

- In question 5 of the "Look" section, the very first act of Paul mentioned after he regained his sight was that he was baptized. As interdenominational church, the Chapel has a considerable number of people who see a biblical argument for the baptism of infants—pedobaptism. We also have a significant number who believe the Bible teaches baptism as identifying with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection in a symbolic cleansing from sin—believer's baptism or credobaptism. When we get to question 5, we do not intend to persuade those who adhere to infant baptism to be baptized as a believer, but it is a great opportunity to mention baptism. You might say something like, "In the New Testament, we repeatedly see baptism as a natural first step for a new believer in Jesus. If you have never been baptized, I encourage you to identify with Jesus through the symbolic act of baptism."
- When you get to question 1 in the application section, I encourage you as a leader to set the pace in the discussion about transformation. Please consider giving a 3 to 5 minute testimony of how you recognized a need for transformation in your life that led you to a humbling encounter with Jesus. If God used other disciples to help and encourage you in that process, please make that a part of your story. Don't limit yourself to your salvation testimony. Share about a time after you became a Christian that the Holy Spirit led you through a process of change in habits, character, attitudes, etc.

Background Helps

- Luke uses “the Way” in 9:2 to refer to followers of Jesus who trusted that He was the promised Messiah. At this point, Jesus’ followers were a movement within Judaism rather than a completely separate group. The use of the term “way” for the Christian movement and the kind of life in accordance with God’s will that was associated with it (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)¹ Jesus called Himself “The way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).
- Damascus — It normally took six days to walk from Jerusalem to Damascus.

Hook: A Question to Help Ignite Conversation

In a minute or less, tell about a time you tried to make a personal change such as diet, exercise, rest, etc. Was it hard? Why or why not?

Look:

Read Acts 9:1–25

1. Verse 1 mentions Saul, “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” What can we recall about Saul’s previous threats or persecution of Jesus’ followers?
2. What do 9:4–5 teach us about the relationship between Jesus and His followers?
3. What do we learn about Ananias in 9:10–17?
4. What two reasons does Ananias give in 9:17 for his going to Saul?
5. What two actions did Saul take following the word “Immediately” in verses 18 and 20?
6. Why did some Jews living in Damascus plot to Kill Saul?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: Applying the message to our lives.

Practical Applications:

1. Other than the more general transformation from not following Jesus to following Jesus, can you point to a humbling encounter with Jesus that resulted in transformation? If God used other disciples of Jesus in a direct way, how so?
2. A conversation referenced in the sermon quoted the Pastor of Eastside church saying, “Tell me the gift God has put in your heart so that I can help you use it.” What gift do you believe God has given you that the rest of us might be able to help you use?
3. Who do you know that would benefit from hearing something God is speaking to you about? Will you pray for God to make you a proclaimer to that person?

Prayer:

- Ananias faced a big challenge in overcoming his fear to go to Saul in obedience to the Lord’s instruction. Can you briefly share a challenge that you are facing?
- Please spend time praying for one another.

¹ I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 575.

Verse (You might consider memorizing this one): “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied” – Acts 9:31

What we hope members glean from the passage.

1. Saul cared for the garments the people who stoned Stephen removed as they threw rocks (Acts 7:58); “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to ”
2. Jesus identifies with His disciples so closely that to persecute His followers is to persecute Jesus. They are in Him and He is in them. He is the vine and they are the branches. He is the head and they are the body.
3. Ananias was a disciple of Jesus living in Damascus. Ananias was apprehensive about going to Saul because he knew of Saul’s violence against Christians. Nevertheless, Ananias went to the house where Saul was, just as the Lord had told him to.
4. Ananias said that He went to Saul as the Lord had told him in order for Paul to regain his sight and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
5. As soon as he regained his sight, Saul “rose and was baptized” (v. 18) and Saul “proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues saying ‘He is the Son of God’” (v. 20).
6. Saul proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (v. 20) and “confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ” (v. 22).