

Small Group Guide: The Most Unlikely Missionary

Based on Acts 9 - Paul's Conversion and Calling

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: If you could walk 8,700 miles (Seattle to Miami and back!), where would you go and why?

Key Sermon Takeaways

1. Paul Was the Most Unlikely Missionary

- He was a devout Pharisee who loved being Jewish
- He was zealous—modeling himself after Phinehas, willing to act violently for God's honor
- He was actively persecuting Christians when Jesus met him

2. How Paul Became a Missionary

- **He was conquered by Jesus** - Jesus arrested him on the Damascus road
- **He was chosen by Jesus** - Given purpose and meaning that suffering can't destroy
- **He was embraced by Jesus' church** - Ananias called him "brother" despite his past

3. What This Teaches Us About Mission Today

- **Know the message clearly** - Focus on Jesus: His life, death, and resurrection
- **Speak the message naturally** - In a way that suits your personality and gifting

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read Acts 9:1-6, 13-17.** What stands out to you most about Paul's encounter with Jesus? What about Ananias's response?

2. The sermon emphasized that Paul was "zealous" for God even while persecuting Christians. How can someone be sincerely religious but sincerely wrong? What does this teach us about zeal versus truth?
3. Why is it significant that Paul needed Ananias to call him "brother" before his sight was restored? What does this tell us about the role of community in our spiritual lives?

Personal Reflection (20-25 minutes)

4. **"You cannot see all that God has for you alone."** How have you experienced this truth? When has community helped you see something about God or yourself that you couldn't see on your own?
5. Paul describes himself as a "prisoner of war" who was defeated by Jesus but then spared and adopted. How does viewing your conversion as Jesus conquering your rebellion change how you think about your relationship with God?
6. The sermon stated: "Being chosen by Jesus doesn't just give Paul a mission, it gives him meaning." How does being chosen by God give you meaning that self-created purpose cannot? What's the difference?

Application & Mission (20-25 minutes)

7. **Six missionary types were mentioned:**
 - **Peter** - Bold, direct speaker
 - **Paul** - Persuader through reasoning and conversation
 - **Blind Man** - Storyteller (shares personal testimony)
 - **Matthew** - Host (creates space around tables)
 - **Samaritan Woman** - Inviter ("come and see")
 - **Tabitha** - Servant (shows Jesus through compassion)

Which of these most naturally fits how God made you? Why?

8. **The Ananias Challenge:** "Who is someone in your life who you could not fathom ever considering Jesus?" Share a name (if comfortable) and pray for that person together.
9. What fears do you relate to in Ananias's response? ("Lord, I've heard about this man...") How can we support each other in overcoming fear when sharing Jesus?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of these to practice this week:

Option 1: Know the Message Clearly

- Write out in 2-3 minutes how you would explain who Jesus is to someone who knows nothing about Him (focus on His life, death, and resurrection)
- Practice sharing it with someone in your group or a Christian friend

Option 2: Speak the Message Naturally

- Identify which "missionary type" best fits you
- Take one concrete step in that direction:
 - *If you're a host:* Invite someone to dinner
 - *If you're an inviter:* Invite someone to church or small group
 - *If you're a storyteller:* Write out your testimony in 5 minutes or less
 - *If you're a persuader:* Have a spiritual conversation with someone
 - *If you're a servant:* Perform an act of service and be ready to share why
 - *If you're direct:* Pray for boldness and look for an opportunity to share Jesus clearly

Option 3: Embrace Community

- Reach out to someone in the group this week for prayer or encouragement
- Be vulnerable about an area where you need others to help you "see" what God is doing

Group Prayer Time

Prayer Focus Areas:

1. **Thanksgiving** - Thank God for His mercy in conquering us and making us His children
2. **For Each Other** - Pray that each person would discover how they naturally share Jesus
3. **For the "Souls"** - Pray for the unlikely people in your lives who seem far from God
4. **For Courage** - Pray for boldness to embrace people the way Ananias embraced Paul

Memory Verse

"I give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he considered me faithful, appointing me to the ministry, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy." - 1 Timothy 1:12-13

Paul describes himself as being 'conquered' by Jesus rather than simply converted. How does viewing your faith journey as a defeat that led to adoption change the way you understand God's grace?

Phinehas's violent zeal was celebrated in Israel's history, yet Paul's zeal led him to persecute Christians. What does this teach us about the difference between religious passion and true relationship with God?

Ananias had to call his enemy 'brother' in obedience to God. Who in your life seems like an unlikely candidate for God's grace, and how might God be calling you to reach out to them?

The sermon states that 'you cannot see all that God has for you alone' and that Paul needed Ananias to restore his sight. In what ways have you experienced spiritual blindness that required community to overcome?

God said 'it is not good for you to be alone' before sin entered the world. How does understanding our need for community as part of God's design rather than a weakness change how we approach relationships?

Paul was told he would suffer for Jesus' name as part of his calling. How does this challenge the modern idea that we can create our own meaning and write suffering out of our stories?

The sermon presents six different ways people naturally share Jesus (bold speaker, persuader, storyteller, host, inviter, servant). Which approach most naturally suits you, and how might God be calling you to lean into that?

Paul went from overseeing Stephen's execution for calling Jesus the Son of God to proclaiming that same message himself. What does this dramatic transformation reveal about the power of encountering Jesus?

If being 'chosen' means your life has meaning that suffering cannot take away, how does this truth speak to areas of hardship or disappointment you're currently facing?

Paul says he received mercy 'so that in me, the worst, Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to others.' How does your own story of mercy become a testimony that points others to Jesus?
