

PAUL: PERSECUTOR TO PREACHER

Obscurity and Delay

Ice breaker: Tell of a memory from childhood when you had a difficult time waiting for something.

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:17)

- **The making of a Christian: chosen, called, changed and charged** – “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...” (Gal. 1:15)

Since being chosen, called, changed and charged is God’s responsibility out of love for His children, which one is most meaningful to you at this point in your life?

Paul went from a moment of spiritual transformation to a season of personal isolation...

...I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. (Gal. 1:15-18)

Describe a time of isolation that was life changing for you.

The gift of a spiritual “Arabian” retreat...

- **Sit and learn from God** – “...I did not consult with any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me...” (Gal. 1:16b-17a)

I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:11-12)

What has God taught you recently as you spent time alone with Him?

- **Sit and deal with yourself** – “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.” (1 Tim. 1:13)

Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind.” (Psalm 26:2)

Is it challenging, painful or comforting to spend time with God allowing Him to deal with the internal parts of your life? Have you ever prayed and asked God to test you, try you and examine you? Share the results if you feel comfortable.

- **Learn the discipline of delay** – “Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem...” (Gal. 1:18)

‡ **A divine delay doesn’t mean a cancelled calling** – “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.” (Acts 26:16)

Tell about a time where you didn't understand a delay after God had given you a clear mission.

- **Clarify your spiritual purpose** – *“I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of His power. Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given to me: the preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...” (Eph. 3:7-8)*

Do you have clarity on the mission that God has called you to? If not, what will you do to discover your purpose?

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. (Acts 9:19b-20)

Set a day and time this week to “choose” to go for a desert retreat with God. The solitude with Him may be just the gift you need.