



PAUL

SESSION 2

- **Main Passage:** Acts 9:10-19
 - **Purpose:** To understand that God has a plan for you and wants to use you for His glory.
 - **Session Snapshot:** God referred to Paul as a chosen instrument to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. Was God aware of who Paul was before? Didn't God know Paul was persecuting the Church? Of course, God knew it; and God used Paul's future and past to bring glory to His name. God can use you too, regardless of your past.
-

GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be continuing a video series on Paul that is part of a larger study on men of the Bible.

If Paul is your first study in the Real Men curriculum, even though it's your second session as a group, consider re-introducing yourself and having the men in your group re-introduce themselves. Then, ask for volunteers to share any thoughts they took away from last week's session. If you want to pass around a contact sheet, again, or do any other second-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Acts 9:1 states that Paul was persecuting Jesus' disciples. What is the significance of Jesus saying, "Why do you persecute me?"** (Discuss how all sin is against God, not just other people.) How does your perception of sin change when you understand that all sin is sinning against God?
- **What was your life like before becoming a Christian?**
- **Ask if anyone would like to share a time where they were ashamed of their reputation before becoming a Christian?**

- Paul's life before his conversion was very different than his life as an Apostle. What do you think Paul would've felt if he'd known what Ananias thought of him before his conversion?
- Why do men allow their past to paralyze their usefulness as instruments for God?
- What does it say about our view of God's ability when we disqualify ourselves for the Lord's work because of our past?
- In the video, Rick makes the statement that God had humbled Paul and God reassured Ananias that he was now ready for service. Why is humility an integral part of being fit for service?
- How has God humbled you in the past to make you ready for the plan He has for you?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- As we explore what it means to be instruments of God, let's spend a few minutes dissecting this passage to more fully understand what is required of us.

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look into Acts 9:10-19.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Acts has long been held to be a letter from Luke, a Gentile physician, to a man named Theophilus, possibly a benefactor of some sort.
- **Time frame:** There is some debate over when Acts was written. The suggested dates are between 70 AD and 80 AD.
- **Purpose:** The Book of Acts is a second letter to Theophilus that tells the story of the early Church following Jesus' resurrection. The book begins with Jesus' ascension and His command of His followers to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The rest of the book traces this journey as the early church leaders proclaim the Gospel and plant churches.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Acts 9:10-19. When the volunteer has finished, ask something like:

- **What was Ananias' role in Paul's conversion?**
 - *Answer:* Ananias was the man God used to restore Paul's sight and baptize him.
- **What obstacles did Ananias have to overcome in order to be an instrument for God?**
 - *Answer:* Ananias was very cautious when dealing with Paul. He knew of Paul's reputation and was fearful that he might get arrested. He had to overcome his doubt, fear, and Paul's past.
- **What did God mean when He told Ananias that Paul would be His chosen instrument to proclaim His name to the Gentiles, kings, and people of Israel?**
 - *Answer:* God had a plan for Paul to be the one who took the Gospel to non-Jewish people. Many of the other disciples were in charge of spreading the Gospel to the Jews, but Paul was who God chose to spread the Gospel to the non-Jews.
- **What did Paul have to overcome to become an instrument for God?**

- *Answer:* Paul had to overcome his past and guilt. He had to overcome his reputation and the perception that he was unfit for service for God.
- **Have someone read Galatians 1:11-24. Ask, what did Paul do to overcome his past and perceptions that people had of him?**
 - Answers should be similar to this: He owned up to the rumors that people had heard of him and acknowledged that he was wrong. But he pointed the Galatians to God and his Son, Jesus, and that God had a plan for him (v13-16).
- **How did Paul prepare himself for ministry?**
 - Answers will vary. He spent time with Jesus (v. 12). While it is not certain what Paul did in Arabia, but based on how Paul was always praying and studying throughout his ministry, we can ascertain that he spent three years in Arabia and Damascus studying scriptures, praying, figuring out his new faith, and possibly preaching (v15-17). He spent time with Peter and James (two disciples and leaders of the church). (v18-19)
- **What can we learn from Paul's response to his calling?**
 - Answers will vary. Understand that God can use you despite your past. God can use your past to open doors to the Gospel. There should be a season of training and prayer and learning after your conversion. Spending time with Jesus is vital to your preparation for ministry. Open yourself up for mentoring relationships with more seasoned Christians.

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **When we look at Ananias and Paul, both had reason to doubt God's plan for them. For Paul, it was his past. For Ananias, it was the fear associated with his calling.**
 - If you find yourself in a position like Paul, where your past and reputation before Christ seems like a hinderance, write down three areas of your pre-conversion life that cause you to doubt God's plan for your life.
 - If you find yourself being more like Ananias in this passage and struggle with fear of God's plan for you, write down three things that cause you to doubt the calling God has for you.
- **How can you respond to each of these areas in a way that honors God and affirms your calling?**
- **What are you currently doing to prepare yourself for God's calling on your life?**

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.