

LEAD SHEET

ACTS : Heroes of the Story - WK. 3

PAUL

JANUARY 10, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

NAVIGATE THE BIBLE

If you want to know God better, read His Word!

GETTING STARTED

Paul is one of the most well known people of the Bible, but you may not know everything about him.

Discussion Questions:

1. How many books of the Bible did Paul compose?
(At least 13, maybe 14 if you count Hebrews.)
2. In addition to Paul, what other name(s) is he called?
(Saul.)
3. When is Paul first called Paul in the Scripture?
(Acts 13:9. Note: it was not a name change based on his conversion, but rather another name that was used based on culture.)
4. According to the Scripture, how many cities does Paul visit? *(48.)*

There is no way we can talk about all that Paul did or learn everything about him in one lesson. However, we do want to talk about his life before Jesus, his conversion, and his ministry afterwards and see what we can learn from his example.

Let's start at the beginning.

DIGGING IN

Read Acts 8:1-3

Discussion Questions:

1. Whose murder does Saul endorse?
(Stephen, the first martyr.)
2. When persecution breaks out, what role does Saul play?
(He begins “to destroy the Church,” going from house to house and jailing Christians.)

Before Paul became Paul, he was Saul. When we first meet him in the book of Acts, he is watching Stephen be stoned to death for preaching the Gospel. He is the absolute last person we might expect to plant hundreds of churches on at least three missionary journeys and write about half the New Testament. However, something drastic happens that changes his life and the history of Christianity forever.

Read Acts 9:1-6

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of threats is Saul “breathing out” against the disciples? *(“Murderous.”)*
2. Where is Saul going in this passage to persecute more believers? *(Damascus.)*
3. As Saul approaches that city, what happens?
(A light from Heaven flashes around him.)
4. After Saul falls to the ground, what does the voice say to him? *(“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”)*
5. How does Saul respond? *(“Who are you, Lord?”)*
6. What does Jesus tell him to do? *(Get up and go into the city and then he’ll be told what to do.)*

What we are seeing is the beginning of the transformation for Paul.

Read Acts 9:7-16

Discussion Questions:

1. When Saul gets up, what is different? (*He is blind.*)
2. Who does Saul meet in Damascus? (*Ananias.*)
3. What are the Lord's instructions for Ananias? (*To go to the house where Saul was staying and restore his sight.*)
4. What is Ananias' reaction in verse 13? (*He has heard reports about Saul and he is a little nervous about the whole thing.*)
5. What does the Lord say to Ananias regarding His purpose for Saul? (*Saul is His chosen instrument to proclaim His name to the Gentiles, their kings, and to the people of Israel.*)

Read Acts 9:17-22

Discussion Questions:

1. Does Ananias obey? (*Yes.*)
2. What does Saul do next? (*He spends some time with the disciples in Damascus.*)
3. When does Saul begin to preach? (*"At once."*)
4. What kind of response does Saul receive from his listeners? (*They were confused because he was the same person that used to imprison them.*)
5. How does Saul react to this response? What do we read about him in verse 22? (*He grows in strength and power, all the while proving that Jesus is the Messiah.*)

By verse 23, the Jews are already plotting to kill the man who once did the killing for them. Thus, Paul's ministry begins. The rest of the book of Acts talks about his powerful impact on the Roman world. It all starts in Antioch.

Read Acts 11:25-26

Discussion Questions:

1. How long do Barnabas and Saul preach in Antioch?
(A year.)
2. What happens for the first time in this city?
(The disciples are called "Christians.")

Paul's ministry launches after his time in Antioch. We do not have enough time today to talk about everything that happened during Paul's ministry, but we can study key aspects of it.

MAKING IT REAL

If you want to learn from Paul, here are a few things we should remember:

1. FORGET YOUR PAST

It is hard for us to wrap our minds around who Paul was before meeting Jesus, but he was the worst of the worst.

General Discussion:

- Who would you say is a great enemy of the Gospel today? *(Atheists, terrorists, etc.)*
- How would you feel if a leader in one of these groups became a Christian and started preaching the Gospel? *(It would seem strange; we would be skeptical.)*
- Do you think people felt that way about Paul? *(We've already seen that they did.)*
- Do you think Paul battled the feelings of guilt, remorse, and inadequacy about his ministry? *(Allow for discussion.)*

Even though he had a past filled with persecuting Christians, it appears that Paul never let his previous life keep him from preaching the Gospel.

Read 1 Timothy 1:16

Discussion Questions:

1. Paul calls himself what in this verse? (*The worst of sinners.*)
2. How does God use Paul's story to influence others? (*Christ's immense patience and mercy are on full display in Paul's story.*)
3. Is it fair to say that if Paul could be saved then anyone can be saved? (*Allow for discussion, but lead students towards the idea that anyone can be saved.*)

I do not know the worst thing you have ever done, but I believe we all need to hear this: there is no one who is too far-gone. You are not too far-gone. The worst kid in your school is not too far-gone. The most evil person on earth is not too far-gone. God's grace is big enough to cover all of us.

2. BE BOLD

Another thing we see in Paul's life is his boldness for the Lord. Time after time, in the face of much opposition, Paul spoke boldly about Jesus.

Read Acts 19:8

Discussion Questions:

1. Where do you think Paul got his boldness? (*The Holy Spirit, encouragement from fellow Christians, sense of calling, etc.*)
2. Why do you think many Christians are not bold for the Lord? (*They may feel like they do not know enough, fear failure or persecution, etc.*)
3. If you had an audience and the opportunity to share the Gospel, what might you say? (*This is a tough question, but let students struggle with it for a bit.*)

3. BE FAITHFUL

The last thing I want to draw out of Paul's story for you is that Paul was faithful.

Read Acts 28:17-20, 30-31

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is Paul at this time?
(Under house arrest in Rome.)
2. What do we know about Paul after this moment?
(Not much, eventually he is killed for preaching.)

Read 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Discussion Questions:

1. Most scholars believe these are the last words Paul ever wrote. How does he sound to you? *(Content, satisfied, hopeful, etc.)*
2. Paul says, "I have kept the faith." Can you say the same about your life so far, why or why not?
(Allow for discussion.)
3. What does a life that can say, "I have kept the faith" look like at the end? How can you live now so that you can say the same thing at the end of your life?
(Allow students to share.)

Paul exhibited getting over his past, preaching with boldness, and remaining faithful. We can do the same when we allow Jesus to change us. We all need to have our own "road to Damascus" experience where we ask: "*Who are you, Lord,*" and then as Jesus commands us to do.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for your students to live as Paul did.