

The Discipleship of the Church

February 5, 2012



Key Verse(s): Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” Acts 9:10

One Church Connection: Disciples are prepared and willing to say, “Here I am, Lord!”

Focal Passage(s): Acts 9:10-31

Listen Attentively to the Lesson

Listen for details

Listen for accuracy

Listen for recall

Listening allows the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

1. Tell the story of Acts 9:10-31 in your own words.

Context: Saul, a Pharisee, a religious zealot and a persecutor of Christians, was converted on the road to Damascus through a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. For three days he was left blind in the city, uncertain of his future yet certain that his life had been changed forever. As Saul prayed, a disciple named Ananias received a vision from the Lord. Ananias’ response was simply, “Here I am, Lord.” He obeyed Christ’s command to go to this new believer. Laying his hands upon him, Saul’s blindness was healed. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was baptized. He began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. That is a wonderful picture of discipleship.

2. Ask the LifeGroup members to reconstruct Acts 9:10-31.

3. Read the passage aloud together from Scripture, confirming the facts.

Investigate the Facts of the Lesson

WHO...Investigate the Characters

WHERE...Investigate the location

WHEN...Investigate the time

Investigating the facts of Scripture confirms the truth in our hearts.

1. Identify the numerous characters other than Saul in this story and discuss how each of these reacted to the news of Saul’s conversion. What was your own reaction when someone you knew was radically saved? How did you personally respond?

Those who travelled with Saul on the road to Damascus, Ananias, Barnabas, the Jews in synagogues where Saul preached, the disciples in Damascus and Jerusalem, and the Hellenistic Jews are the characters in this story. Discuss why the characters reacted so differently to Saul’s conversion. What motivated their thinking?

2. Talk about the significance of each of the locations in this story and how the events in each place impacted the life and ministry of this man who would come to be the Apostle Paul. Have there been significant moments and places in your own spiritual journey?

This story takes place in several different places: the road to Damascus, the city of Damascus, the Jewish synagogues, the church in Jerusalem and all of Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

3. Ask LifeGroup members to recall the encouragers and the discouragers who have crossed their paths, detailing how their development as a follower of Christ was impacted.

Paul's story is not unique among believers. There will always be those disciples used by God to encourage and equip us. There will also be those enemies of the cross who will attack, ridicule and discourage us.

4. Read Acts 9:31. List as many different characteristics of the church as possible. Compare and contrast to church life at Second Baptist.

Find the purpose of the lesson

WHY...Find the intent

WHAT...Find the meaning

WHEREAS...Find the Significance

God always works with a purpose.

1. One of the most exciting things about being a disciple of Christ is discovering His purpose for our lives. This journey's many turns demands that we walk by faith and prepare ourselves for whatever the Lord may have in mind. Ananias and Barnabas were such disciples.

a. Discuss the various aspects of Ananias' story in vv. 10-18.

What was his call? How was he an answer to prayer? What was his excuse? What was his role in producing another disciple? How would you describe his obedience?

b. Discuss the various aspects of Barnabas' story in vv. 26-27.

Discuss his willingness to take a risk, his desire to invest in another believer's life, and his confidence in the life changing power of the gospel.

2. In this passage we see the revelation of God's purposes for Saul's (Paul's) life. Read vv.15-16. Discuss the significance of this revelation to Saul, to the church, and to your life. Reference these additional verses to support your discussion.

• "A chosen instrument of mine"

Jesus said in John 15:16, "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit..." (NASB).

• "Bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel"

Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 9:2, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land the light will shine on them" (NASB).

• "Show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake"

Paul would reflect upon his suffering later in his ministry in 2 Corinthians 12:9: "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (NASB).

3. Read Acts 9:20-22. Discuss how Paul became both a new creature in Christ and an ambassador for Christ. Is it possible for a person to come to Christ without noticeable change in lifestyle and behavior? Why or why not? When you look at what God is accomplishing in your life, are you "increasing in strength" as you seek to "prove that this Jesus is the Christ?"

As your LifeGroup responds, reference what Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold new things have come....Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:17, 20).

4. While it is hard for believers to accept, persecution and affliction often are the means God uses to accomplish His purposes. This was certainly a pattern that would be replayed time and time again throughout Paul's life. As you consider Acts 9:29-30, how were the purposes of God fulfilled through this attempt on Saul's life? Have you seen evidence in your life that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28 NASB)?

Be prepared to share from your own life experiences of affliction.

Experience the knowledge

Experience the change

Experience the joy

Experience the Truth of the Lesson

Experiencing the truth of God's Word equips church members to be the church.

1. The mission of Second Baptist Church is to make disciples. Consider this definition of a disciple: *A fully committed follower of Jesus Christ who lives like he or she believes the Bible is true.* Ananias lived that out in his relationship with the newly converted Saul. When was the last time you took personal interest for God to use you to open someone's eyes to the truth of the gospel? Did you model for that person how to live a Spirit-filled life? Did you encourage the new believer to obediently follow Christ in baptism? Were you able to demonstrate how to share their new found faith in the Son of God?

These key elements of disciple-making can cause the church to increase and the kingdom to expand. Believing that going is important to God and that disciples are made not born, discuss how you might guide a new believer in these areas.

2. Prayer plays an essential role in our ability to experience the truth in a way that assists us in growing as disciples. Saul prayed. Ananias prayed. The disciples in Damascus prayed. Barnabas prayed. The apostles prayed. Discuss how this story might be different if prayer had been absent.

As you discuss how prayer applies to this story, also challenge your LifeGroup to reflect on how their own lives would be different without the power of prayer. Read Jesus' prayer in John 17:13-21, then reflect on its implications for the Christian's life.

3. Twice in this passage, Saul's life was threatened (vv. 23-25, 29). Yet, these threats did not deter him from answering God's call. His writings throughout the New Testament reflect an understanding of what sustained him during these difficult times. Read the following passages and discuss how Paul's words might encourage you when faced with the possibility of death.

- Romans 8:31, 35-40
- 1 Corinthians 15:19
- Philippians 1:21-24
- 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Are there any other writings of Paul that come to mind that may be helpful for you or someone you love when being confronted by death?

Encourage your LifeGroup to share which passage speaks most to their hearts.

4. The willingness of these early disciples to reproduce themselves had a positive impact on the church in "Judea and Galilee and Samaria" (v.31). This impact was their experience of enjoying peace, being strengthened spiritually, continuing to fear the Lord, being comforted by the Spirit, and increasing in number. As you examine your growth as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, how is He equipping you to be a blessing to those who now make up or who will make up the body of Christ—the church at Second Baptist? Who will you invite to join our ONE LifeGroup of 1000 on March 4?

Take time to encourage your LifeGroup to pray about their role in making March 4 a day of spiritual growth and celebration.

Truth Points

Gentiles (v. 15) – The word is used to reference anyone who was not of the Jewish faith.

Encourage your LifeGroup to invest time in reflecting, praying, and going,
always remembering that going is important to God.