

LifeGroup Member

Preparing for Life Lesson 9: The Divine Purpose of the Church February 26, 2012



Key Verse(s): “To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” Acts 26:18

One Church Connection: Jesus’ words to the Apostle Paul at his conversion on the road to Damascus serve as a declaration of the divine purpose of His church.

Focal Passage(s): Acts 26:12-20

Context: In Acts 26, the Apostle Paul is imprisoned in Caesarea awaiting transport to Rome where he, as a Roman citizen, hopes to plead his case before the Emperor. While visiting with the Roman Governor Porcius Festus, King Agrippa requested an audience with Paul (25:22). The Apostle defends himself against the accusations of the Jews by sharing his personal testimony including his life as a Pharisee, a brief history of Judaism, his persecution of the church, his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, and his ministry to Jews and Gentiles across the Roman Empire (Acts 26:1-20).

Paul never forgot his first encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the call that was placed upon his life. It gave meaning and purpose to his life, guiding him to take the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. His position as a minister and a witness would define his task. His call to share the gospel with the Jews and Gentiles would guide his steps. His concern for people living in darkness and under the dominion of Satan would determine his passion. His own gift of forgiveness and eternal life would dominate his message. And near the end of his life as a servant of Christ, including three long and arduous missionary journeys, Paul would be able to stand and say, “I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision.”

Connecting to the Passage

Life Stealer

John 10:10

Jesus came to bring us truth, freedom, light and as we read today, life. As we often hear, to do this he lived blamelessly, not once compromising or submitting to temptation, and never forsaking the Father’s will. We who are Christians, followers of Christ, find this life and give glory to Him by obeying Him and walking as He walked. We have been redeemed, literally taken from a domain of darkness to a kingdom of light, and this changes us. Our deepest desires now resonate with the things that are of the light, that glorify God and conform us to His image. But these are often the hard things in life, requiring great effort, courage, and strength.

What we should never forget is that there is a powerful enemy. This enemy is a thief, a liar, and as strong as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). He is also clever, and doesn’t always display his strength in such obvious ways, remember, he is of the darkness. God brings us into our purpose, our calling, the Spirit leading us into partnership with Him. But if we look at our lives, are we accomplishing what God has set before us? What is your calling? Is it to be a Godly husband and father, spiritually leading your household even when you’re tired? Is it to be a student of God’s word, entering more deeply into its truth, even when there are video games around? Whatever it may be, do not let the enemy steal your life through laziness, distraction, or fearfulness. Jesus lived, incarnated, and died so that we could be in right relationship with God, the enemy will employ any means necessary to keep us from that. Often though, his fingerprints are not so easily visible on the things keeping us from fulfilling our glorious purpose.

Take a moment to reflect on just who God has made you to be. Now what is keeping you from being that man or woman of God? Resist the enemy, the stealer of life, and press into the giver of life.

Connecting with the Passage

1. Read Acts 26:12-20.
2. What are the key words that stand out to you in this passage?
3. What is the main idea of this passage? Is there more than one theme?
4. What does this passage reveal about who God is?
5. What does this passage reveal about what it means to be a disciple of Christ?
6. Is there a truth or a phrase from this passage that is particularly meaningful to you in your current life circumstances? How can this truth or phrase strengthen your walk with Christ?
7. Is there a word, phrase, or verse that you have questions about? If so, write down your questions. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to increase your understanding. Read the passage again.
8. Ask God to help you apply the truths of this passage today. If this time of study has brought to mind any prayer requests you can bring to God about your friends, family, church, nation, or world, talk with God about these prayer concerns.



Preparing for LifeGroup Discussions

1. Read Acts 26:1-11; how did Paul's background make His conversion to Christ more amazing?
2. For what purpose did Jesus appear to Paul (v.16)? How did Paul know from these words that his life would never be the same?
3. Paul said he was being judged "for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (v.6). How do Jesus' words in Acts 26:17-18 explain how He is our hope?
4. Paul was not following his own desires, but was being obedient to the vision from God (vv.19-20). How do you discern in your life if you are following your own desires or God's plan for you?