

Message Discussion Guide

ACTS: TRANSFORMATION

The Church at Brook Hills

Deric Thomas

January 30, 2011

Acts 9:1-31

This guide is designed to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use, and there may be instances when you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience, not complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool rather than a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Deric illustrated God's patience by sharing examples of ways he's shown patience to his 4 year old daughter. To who do you show patience? Is patience always easy to show? When is it difficult to be patient with someone?

Option 2

The last song before the message was Chris Tomlin's "Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)." The writer of the original version of "Amazing Grace" was John Newton, a 1700's English slave ship captain turned pastor and hymn writer. Much like the Apostle Paul, Newton had a dramatic conversion story. Take a few minutes to allow volunteers to share other dramatic conversion stories, both from personal experience and historically renowned figures.

Biblical Context of the Message . . .

Luke wrote the book of Acts sometime between 60 and 70 A.D. to present a history of the early Church after Christ's ascension. He recorded with great detail the apostles' journeys and the Church's growth, encouraging believers facing persecution with Christ's ultimate triumph. The book begins with Christ's ascension and ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome.

TRANSFORMATION

The Patience of God, The Power of God, and the Passion of Paul (Acts 9:1-31)

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I (Paul) am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. (1 Tim. 1:15-16)

The Patience of God

(Acts 9:1-3)

Love is patient . . . (1 Cor. 13:4) . . . God is love. (1 Jn. 4:8)

- See God's patience toward sinful people. (Lk. 15:11-32, Matt. 9:9-13, Lk. 19:10)

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- See God's patience toward you. (Rom. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9, Lk. 22:54-62)

Truth: God is patient toward sinful people, including you.

Takeaway: Understanding and experiencing God's patience leads to humility.

- Read Acts 9:1-3. Describe Paul before his conversion.
- How did God show patience toward Paul in his sinfulness?
- Were you aware of God's patience with you before you became a believer? What about now?
- How well do you reflect God's patience to others? What does your patience show others about the God you serve?
- How does understanding God's patience toward you produce humility?
- How can you become more patient? (See Galatians 5:22-23.)

Prayer of Response and Application

Break into small groups based on gender. Direct each person to share one way they are weak in patience. Spend just a few minutes in groups praying for each other in those specific ways.

- Father, thank you for your patience towards us. As we continue to see and experience your patience, help us to grow in patience towards others. (Col. 3:12-15, 2 Tim. 3:10, 2 Tim. 4:2)

The Power of God

(Acts 9:4-19)

- See the power of God's sovereign mercy. (Gal. 1:15-16, Rom. 9:15-16)
- See God's power in conversion. (1 Pet. 1:3)
- See God's power through His church. (Jn. 13:34-35, 1 Cor. 12:21-26)
- See how God's power gives you hope. (Is. 63:1, Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 15:55-57, Rev. 21:5)

Truth: God's power is evident in His mercy, by the way He converts sinful people, and through His church.

Takeaway: God's power gives you hope because no one is beyond the power of Almighty God.

- Read Acts 9:4-19, stopping and noting each verse that shows God's

- power.
- Saul's nasty reputation was so well-known that Ananias felt the need to remind the Lord of what Paul had done. Yet he obeyed God. How does the way Ananias spoke to Saul show God's power in His church?
 - How did God use other believers in Paul's conversion?
 - Are there people you might be tempted to consider unreachable by the gospel? If so, who?
 - How should the way you view even the vilest of sinners change in light of God's power to reach *anyone*?
 - Do you believe God can use you to reach anyone He desires? If so, how should that change the way you pray and live?

Prayer of Response and Application

Break into small groups based on gender. Remind groups that God's power is made perfect in our weakness. Spend just a few minutes in groups sharing ways they've experience God's power when they felt weak or incapable and to then pray together based on this guide:

- Father, thank you for your power. As we continue to see and experience your power towards us, help us to depend less on ourselves and more on You. (Eph. 1:16-23, Eph. 3:14-21, 2 Cor. 12:8-10)

The Passion of Paul (Acts 9:20-31)

- See Paul's passion for evangelism from the moment of his conversion. (Rom. 15:20-21)
- See Paul's passionate love for Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:7-11)
- See how even the most passionate followers of Jesus Christ can't live life alone. (1 Cor. 12:12-20)
- See how God builds up and multiplies His church. (Prov. 8:13, Jn. 14:15-18)
- See Paul's passion for Christ as a response to the love of Christ toward him. (1 Jn. 4:19)
- See God's passion for you in Jesus Christ. (Jn. 3:16, 1 Jn. 4:10)

Truth: Paul was passionate in evangelism because of his love for Jesus, which was a response to Jesus' love toward him.

Takeaway: Experiencing the love of Christ always produces the fruit of a deeper love for Christ, evangelism, and a passion for God's people.

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- Read Acts 9:20-31. When Saul regained his strength, where did his newfound passion take him?
- In these verses, how did God use other believers in Saul's life? Why is that significant?
- Describe someone who is *passionate*.
- Is there a connection between your awareness of Christ's love for you and the way you share Christ's love with others? Why?
- What is the difference between people who share the gospel in response to Christ's love and people who evangelize because "it's just what they're supposed to do"?
- How does Christ's love motivate your prayer for others—from the people in this small group with you to persecuted brothers and sisters around the world?
- This week, how can you more intentionally let passion for Christ fill your relationships and the way you pray? How are you serving God out of your passion for Him?

Prayers of Response and Application

Once again, break into small groups based on gender. Spend just a few minutes in groups sharing how they've experienced God's passion for them and how God's passion led them to serve God. Then, ask them to pray together based on this guide:

- Father, thank you for your passionate love for us. As we continue to see and experience your passionate love, help us to grow in passionate love for you, and passionate love for those you are still seeking to **TRANSFORM** among all ethnic groups in Birmingham, the United States, and our entire planet! (1 Cor. 13:4-14:1, 1 Jn. 4:11-12)