

## **SMALL GROUP: PAUL**

### **CATCH UP**

This section is designed for each person to share their experiences from last weeks' application. This should be an encouraging time and not a time to shame someone for not doing their assignment - simply let a couple of people share how their project went. Be sure to encourage the group to talk about their struggles, oppositions, and defeats as well as their successes.

### **WARM UP**

Today's activity is a bit risky and could be a real eye-opener. Have everyone share one thing about their parent(s) that is painfully true to admit for you. (*Is your dad actually a really good dancer? Is your mom very popular among your friend group? Does your parent(s) pick up games really easily?*) Share your attitude toward their skills.

### **READ UP**

- Philippians 3
- Acts 9:1-30
- Romans 1:16-17

Paul lived a life of extreme faith. He had been a radically religious man his whole life. He lived a life of extreme conviction for what he believed. Before Paul had an encounter with God in Acts 9, he was a devoted follower of his religion - he was also a persecutor of the early church. He lived his life pursuing and threatening anyone and everyone who claimed to follow Jesus Christ. It took a radical confrontation from Jesus for him to change his view on Christ. With the same intensity, he persecuted the church with - Paul promoted and boldly proclaimed Christ for the remainder of his life.

The Apostle Paul was a man of tremendous courage when it came to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was a man who was persecuted and beaten for His commitment to Christ virtually everywhere he went. He never gave up, even though there were times I am sure he wanted to. He understood the impact the Gospel could have on an individual, and he made it his life's mission to spread the message throughout the world. As believers, we should have the same approach Paul did throughout the scriptures, passionately pursue God, and never giving up. We may never be called to go into the mission field or life in ministry like Paul, but each and every one of us will have thousands of opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ with those around us.

Responding to the Gospel is vital to our eternity. Sharing the Gospel should be hugely important to those of us who have already surrendered our lives to Christ. Paul understood the Gospel was God's power unto salvation, essential to real genuine faith, and reveals God's righteousness. The Gospel is very powerful. We as humans are completely and utterly hopeless without the powerful work of Christ in our lives. We cannot change our hearts and sinful nature on our own. We are in absolute need of a Savior and the Gospel of Christ has the power to provide that.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to change people - to remove the sting of sin, free us from Satan, from judgment, from death, and from hell. Not only is it powerful - it also provides us salvation. Salvation means deliverance. It means to be let loose from Satan and judgment and hell and only the Gospel of Christ have the power to do that.

The gospel is also essential to our faith. Anyone who places faith in Jesus will be saved by the power of God. Where there is faith, there is the power of God operating in our salvation. Faith is complete trust in Christ. It's trusting that Christ lived the life he said he lived, died the death he died, and rose again. Faith is not from your efforts, but it is a gift from God. When someone has faith in Christ, it is because the power of God worked in their life and they were then granted the gift of faith.

The Gospel also changes us. Once we put our trust in Jesus the righteousness of God is revealed to us. The righteousness of God becomes yours! We know that we as humans are incapable of being righteous on our own, and the only way we can be righteous is when we put our faith in Christ and God reveals His righteousness to us. Jesus took our sin and switched it out for God's righteousness. That's why it says that Christ became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The sad reality is you and I tend to look at the Gospel as embarrassing. We would never openly admit that, but when you see our fears in sharing the Gospel, it becomes glaringly evident. We have opportunities to speak and we don't. We have opportunities to be bold we aren't.

I am sure there were times when Paul did not speak up when he could have – he also didn't give up in his efforts towards boldness. We know that the Gospel is foolishness to those who don't believe, and we know that we face hostility from the world. We oftentimes fear what others will think about us or we may even fear rejection. Whatever the reason is, we find ourselves shying away from opportunities to share and proclaim the gospel.

In Romans 1:16-17, Paul proclaimed that he is not "ashamed of the Gospel." Paul understood exactly what the stakes were with the Gospel message - a person's eternal destiny. Because of this truth, he was not afraid to proclaim it. He has been imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica, smuggled from Berea, laughed at in Athens, seen as a fool in Corinth, an irritating sore spot in Jerusalem, and stoned while in Galatia. Yet he was proud, overjoyed, and eager to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Following Paul's example is a high calling for each of us.

## **TALK UP**

1. Why is it hard for you to share the Gospel of Christ with those around us? What is it that makes you give up different times?
2. Have you ever considered just how powerful and important sharing the Gospel of Christ is (Reflect on that for a moment and write down what you think about)?
3. Who is someone close to you that you should share Jesus Christ with? What are some ways you can turn a conversation into sharing your story of faith in Jesus Christ? What are some questions you could ask someone that could lead to a spiritual conversation?

## **ACT UP**

Today share with someone about Jesus Christ. Share with them about what Jesus has done in your life and what it means to have a relationship with him.

## **PRAY UP**

Ask God to help you look at each fear you experience in sharing the Gospel and how to work through those fears in His power.

## **GATHER UP**

Before everyone leaves, make sure you confirm next weeks' meeting day and time – and confirm those who can make it.