Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

ACTS | Powered by the Spirit | Spirit Powered Change

**WEEK 7– ACTS 9**

Last week we read about the church beginning to experience persecution. First, the Apostles were arrested, beaten, and threatened. Then, a man named Stephen was stoned to death for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. As a seemingly insignificant footnote to the story of his martyrdom, we read “And Saul was there, giving approval to his death” (8:1). But this wasn’t the last we would hear of this man. Chapter 8 begins with a further escalation of the persecution of Christians and Saul is leading the way. He is seeking to destroy the church, even going from house to house, having believers arrested (8:3). But God was even using the persecution as a way to spread the gospel. Believers who were scattered preached the good news wherever they went (8:4).

This week, as we discuss **Spirit Powered Change**, our focus is on the radical transformation God brought about in the life of a man whose mission it had become to destroy the church. In fact, we will discover that Saul, later called Paul, would not only convert to Christianity but also become one of the greatest missionaries and church planters the world would ever see. He is also responsible for writing a large portion of the books that make up the New Testament. **Pray for understanding and then read about his conversion in Acts 9:1-31.**

**Some Specifics of Saul’s Conversion**

* A voice from heaven (Jesus) spoke to Saul. What question did He ask? (9:4)
* What do you think it means that Jesus sees persecution against the church (believers) as persecution against Him?
* God used other believers to bring Saul to faith in Christ. Who did He use in the following verses and how?
  + 9:10-17
  + 9:26-30
* He hadn’t eaten in three days, but what did Saul do before satisfying his hunger? (9:18-19)
* What does that say about the relative importance of our physical needs as compared to our spiritual needs?

**God Choosing Unlikely People**

When Ananias was understandably reluctant to go to Saul, the Lord said “This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles…” (9:15). These words are shocking at first, but we discover that God actually makes a habit of choosing and using unlikely people. What was it about these other “chosen” people that made them unlikely choices?

* Moses: Exodus 2:11-12, 4:10
* Rahab: Hebrews 11:31 / Joshua 2
* King Saul: 1 Samuel 9:18-21

**Change is for Everyone**

Saul/Paul underwent a massive transformation in his life from church destroyer to church planter. We might think that such radical change is only for those who were once felons or Satanists, but that isn’t true. We are all called to undergo a process of transformation that results in us becoming like Jesus (Romans 8:29, Galatians 4:19). But how does that change come about?

* The Bible teaches that every Christ-follower receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the Spirit produces fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). How is that fruit described?
* Saul/Paul wrote about another way that we experience change. What does Romans 12:1-2 say is the key to transformation? How does 2 Corinthians 10:5 further expound on this idea?

**Challenge for the Week**

God wants us to be freed from our past sins and mistakes and learn to live in a new way, and that begins with us believing that real transformation is possible. Make some time this week to meditate on the truths below. In your quiet time, memorize the following verses and repeat them to yourself often.

* I am forgiven of my past sin.
  + “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103:12)
  + “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)
* I am a new person.
  + “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
* God gives me the power to change.
  + “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

**Discussion Questions**

The believers were slow to believe Saul had really changed. Can you identify a time in which you doubted the change is someone else’s life was genuine?

Saul had something like scales fall from his eyes in the process of his conversion. Have you experienced an “aha moment” in which you seemed to see things clearly for the first time? If so, please describe.

Saul became a Christian and yet other Christians were afraid of him because of his past. What are some ways in which you have had to experience some consequences of a past mistake even after you had been forgiven?

One way we change is by the Holy Spirit producing fruit in our lives. Why do you think the Spirit seems to produce more in the lives of some believers than others? Or why do you think we might experience a lot of fruit in some seasons of our lives and less in others?