

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

No Other Like Jesus, Your Grace Is Enough, Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace), One Thing Remains, Christ is Enough

WELCOME

Do you personally know someone who you think is a “hopeless” case? Have you given up (or tempted to give up) praying, caring and sharing to someone who persecutes you or who has not responded positively to the gospel even if they have heard it many times?

WORD

ACTS 9:3-6

³ As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, ⁶ but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

Paul, next to Jesus, had the most impact on the growth and history of Christianity. But before he became an apostle of Christ, he was Saul, the Pharisee, a persecutor of the early church who heartily approved of Stephen's death by stoning.

Saul's goal was to stamp out the early church so that he set out to imprison anyone who was a believer (**Acts 9:1-2**). But the full force of God's amazing grace stopped him from continuing on a path of destruction (**Acts 9:3-9**) and transformed him into the apostle Paul we know today who wrote the most number of books in the Bible (thirteen epistles in the New Testament) and planted the most number of churches in the early days of the Christian faith (**Acts 9:15-16**).

GOD TRANSFORMS THROUGH HIS GRACE

On his way to destroy the church at Damascus, Saul had a life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus (**Acts 9:3-6**). This was not the only time that God tried to get Saul's attention. Paul testifies about this in **Acts 26:14** “*And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’*” Goads are circumstances in our lives that God uses to prick our hearts for us to hear His voice and return to Him. With Saul, among other things, God used Stephen's testimony as one goad that probably pricked Saul's hard heart. Later, he was transformed because of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

God's grace reaches out to us in many ways and times in our lives. Though our own stories may not be as

dramatic as Paul's, we can be sure that God still transforms us through his grace. This is why we should not give up on people who may seem so unresponsive to the gospel. God's grace can transform anyone and all of us.

GOD TRANSFORMS HOW WE RELATE TO HIM

In **Acts 9:9-11**, Saul was praying and fasting for three days during his physical blindness. Who was he praying to? The Lord Jesus, who Paul was persecuting just a few verses earlier (**Acts 9:5**)! God transforms us, then he transforms how we relate to him. From **hostility** towards the Lord, Saul was now beginning to experience **intimacy** with Jesus. In fact, after that he spent three years learning more about who Jesus is (**Acts 9:23; Galatians 1:17**). Paul's intimacy with God was the reason why he was so effective in the ministry. How about us? Not many of us can take three years to spend time with God, but how about taking fifteen minutes each day to learn more about Jesus through his Word and prayer?

GOD TRANSFORMS HOW WE RELATE TO OTHERS

Acts 9:17-19;26-27 shows how God also transformed Saul's relationship with other believers. The Lord used Ananias in Damascus, and later on, Barnabas in Jerusalem, to care for Saul's physical and spiritual needs as a brother in Christ. These two heroes of the faith introduced Saul to the rest of the church, and welcomed him into the family of believers. We too can be like Ananias and Barnabas and welcome new believers to the church, help them grow in their

WORD (cont'd)

relationship with God and others. One good way we can do that is to invite them to our small groups.

God's transformation of Saul's relationship with others resulted in a time of peace and much growth in the early church. Saul, the **persecutor** was transformed into a **preacher** who was speaking boldly for the Lord (**Acts 9:27-31**). His preaching was not just about his testimony only, Saul's message was centered on the Person of Jesus Christ (**Acts 9:22**). We must do the same — focus on who Jesus Christ is when we share the gospel to others.

GOD TRANSFORMS HOW WE RELATE TO THE WORLD

God gives us a new message and a new mission when he transforms us. This is what happened to Saul (**Acts 9:22**) who used his knowledge and training as a Pharisee to prove that Jesus is the Christ using the

Scriptures to help people understand who Jesus is. When you have experienced God's transformation, he takes your ability, whatever it is that you have become good at to magnify his kingdom. Our old mission may not be as awful as Saul's (destroy God's people), but our old mission was to build our own kingdom. But when God's grace transforms us, like Paul, let us count all accomplishments as "rubbish" for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ.

God has a mission for you, and just as Paul was successful in accomplishing his God-given mission because of the Holy Spirit's power (**Acts 1:8; Galatians 1:11-17**), we will be too as we depend on the Holy Spirit to enable us to share Christ to others. How are we transformed? It **begins** with a personal encounter with **Jesus**, which **begets** a **belief**, **repentance** and **surrender**, that **blooms** into a life of **love**, **service** and **sacrifice**.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Are you experiencing God's transformation in your life daily? How are you relating to God, to others, and to the world?
2. Have you been ignoring the "goats" that God uses to call your attention to your need for Him? How can you respond better?
3. Do you welcome new believers in your Dgroup? What is stopping you from starting your own small group?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for that person that you might have given up hope on them responding positively to the gospel. Share your testimony of transformation and focus on who Jesus is as you share the gospel to others this week.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends