



10/20/2019
Acts 26:12-32

BIG IDEA

We proclaim the *resurrection* and *repentance*

LOOKING BACK

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.

- What are some taboo topics for conversations these days?
- Why do you think discussions about religion and faith are so controversial?

When meeting new people, talking with acquaintances, or even conversing with close friends and family, we know that there is a limited list of "safe" topics. You can always talk about the weather. You can always ask, "What do you do?" when referring to jobs or hobbies. Family discussions are usually acceptable. But don't you dare talk about politics or religion. At least, that is what our culture has determined to be off-limits in order to preserve civil discourse. But for believers in Jesus Christ, the taboo topics of religion and faith must be faced head-on.

LOOKING IN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 26:12-18.*

- When, why, and how did you encounter Jesus and surrender your life to Him? What was it like? What led up to it?
- What were significant moments, relationships, or experiences that helped you understand and choose to follow Jesus?
- Explain the importance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Could your story be possible without any of these three? Why or why not?

Paul preached the gospel of Jesus crucified and raised from the dead. In his own day, this was foolishness to the Gentiles and a stumbling block to the Jews, yet this was his faithful message to the end of his life (1 Cor. 1:18-25). Our experience with the gospel and sharing the gospel with others will likely seem

foolish and crazy to some, but this is our story, this is our message. We shouldn't sensationalize our past, but neither should we downplay the weirdness of Jesus revealing Himself to us in the gospel.

| **Ask a volunteer to read Acts 26:19-32.**

- How does Paul describe his mission and his message?
- Why do many Christians shy away from talking about sin and the need for repentance when talking to people about the Lord? Why is it necessary that we do include that part of the gospel message?

Jesus called Paul to be an apostle of the gospel to Jews and significantly to Gentiles. He was to preach the truth of Jesus to his own people and to cross societal boundaries in order to preach to those who worshiped other gods. He called people everywhere to repentance, to turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and to live repentant lives. And he was clear about the suffering of the Messiah, knowing it was God's plan communicated even throughout the Old Testament. This gospel message is the light of God to a dark world.

- How would you describe your mission and message?
- Why do you think Paul was willing to preach the gospel when so much was at stake for him personally?
- What are some situations where you feel uncomfortable sharing the gospel? Do you tend to go ahead and talk about the Lord in those situations anyway, or do you tend to avoid it? Explain.
- What principles about sharing the gospel can you gain from Paul's example in Acts 26?

We cannot control how people will respond to the gospel. We pray for faith to arise in those who hear the message of Christ, but we must also pray for our own hearts to respond with gentleness and compassion, no matter what the response of the other person. Paul knew the message of the gospel comes with consequences in this world. If Jesus suffered, then His messengers can expect to suffer, too. Whether easily or with difficulty, Paul's heart was to see people saved by the good news of Jesus. To honor Christ, we must give our own defense of our gospel hope with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:13-17).

LOOKING FORWARD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What obstacles or hangups tempt you toward a passive faith and relationship with the Lord?
- How does Paul's story in Acts 25-26 challenge and encourage you?

FAMILIES

Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.

- Share your personal testimony with your family and ask them to do the same.
- Pray for the people you know who need to hear the gospel message, and for God to give you opportunities to do so.

PRAY

Thank God the gospel message is powerful and unchanging. Thank Him for drawing people to Himself, and for the privilege of being involved in that process through the words you speak and life you live. Ask Him for boldness as you share the gospel with someone new this week.

COMMENTARY**| Acts 26:12-32**

26:14 Only in this account of his conversion did Paul say the voice from heaven spoke to him in the Hebrew language. "Hebrew" may literally have been Aramaic, the common tongue of the first-century Jew. It is hard for you to kick against the goads probably meant that Paul should not resist the divine force that was moving him in a new direction.

26:16-18 These three verses are not included in the accounts of Paul's conversion in chapters 9 or 22, even though the mention of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles was a message given to Ananias in Damascus (9:15; 22:15). Many scholars believe the essence of Paul's mission to the Gentiles was revealed to him at the time of his conversion. Certainly these three verses summarize Paul's ministry to both Jews and Gentiles.

26:19 "I was not disobedient" is a spectacular understatement in light of Paul's faithfulness to God's calling, even through remarkable hardships.

26:20-21 Paul's faithfulness to "the heavenly vision" (v. 19) was the very reason the Jews seized him and wanted him dead. Thus Paul's stance is reminiscent of the one taken by "Peter and the apostles" in 5:29, where they said, "We must obey God rather than men." This is living out the principle Jesus taught in Mt 10:28.

26:22-23 Paul emphasized that the message of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection matched OT teachings. He probably had in mind such prophetic passages as Isa 52:13-53:12.

26:24 Festus took Paul to be mad because of talk about resurrection and Messiah, Jewish beliefs that seemed foolish to the Gentile world.

26:25-26 As evidence for his good judgment, Paul pointed out that the major events of Christianity had not taken place in a corner, out of sight and scrutiny. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were all public and could not have escaped King Agrippa's notice.

26:27 Paul played to the king's Jewishness. If Agrippa was a good Jew, he should have accepted the prophets and their message about Jesus.

26:28 Scholars disagree over whether Agrippa's response was sarcastic anger, a jest, or a sign that Paul's logic was close to persuading him.

26:29 Paul's rhetorical skills were at their best as he concluded his speech. His confidence in Christ was such that he wished that all who listen could become as him, except for the chains.

26:31 Objective judgment could lead to only one conclusion: Paul was innocent. But Paul's life was held in the service of the Lord, not the judgments of men.

26:32 The charges against Paul were found to be groundless before both Roman and Jewish authorities. Nevertheless, Paul's appeal to Rome put his case in a special category that must be discharged by Caesar himself.