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## WARM UP

What is the greatest transformation you've ever seen anyone go through?

## WORD

Read **Acts 7:58-8:3, 9:1-19**

What an amazing transformation - only God can completely change someone who notoriously persecuted Christians and ordered Stephen's death by stoning. What is it that would change this man, Saul the killer of Christians, to Paul, arguably the most important figure in the first century of the Church?

## NOTES

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## 1 Why Are You Persecuting Me?

<sup>1</sup>But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup>and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup>And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

**Acts 9:1-4** (ESV)

Saul is still threatening and persecuting disciples of Jesus, and he goes to the high priest to get authorisation letters to capture and possibly kill Christians he would encounter. Light shines on Saul while he is on his way to Damascus. Interestingly, Saul's name is called twice: Jesus is really trying to get his attention. Saul is noted as persecuting not only the Church, but also Jesus himself.

If you experience persecution for your faith in Christ, find encouragement that Jesus can get the attention of those who persecute you. Christ also says that as you are persecuted in his name, you represent him well.

- Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? What happened?
- How has God tried to get your attention in the past? Is he trying to get your attention in specific areas now?

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## 2 Rise and Enter

<sup>5</sup>And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup>But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup>The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup>Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**Acts 9:5-9** (ESV)

Jesus instructs Saul to go into the city until receiving further instruction. Saul rises, but is blind and unable to eat for three days. Within moments, Saul went from being a vigilant man on a mission and in control to being a man humbled and utterly dependent on the word of Jesus. It's from here that Saul enters into his true destiny as an apostle of Christ. We can only enter into the destiny God has for us when we are humbled and utterly dependent on him.

- What is it that you depend on to guide your life's decisions? How does it guide you?
- What are ways that we can show ourselves to be utterly dependent on God?

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### ▲ PRAYER

- If you don't know Christ, or believe that there is a new level to knowing him that you haven't yet experienced, pray that you will know him in such a way that you will encounter the Christ who was willing to lay down his life for you out of love.
- Pray for those who have experienced persecution because of their faith.
- Pray that God will be your source for everything.