

NOTES

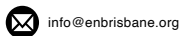
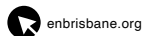


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OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, help us to hear Your voice tonight with honesty and humility. Show us where we may be resisting You, give us courage to respond, and help us recognise where You are calling us to stand and where You are sending us. Holy Spirit, give us the power not simply to know what Jesus is saying, but to respond to Him. Amen.

OPENING QUESTION_(OPTIONAL)

Think about a time when someone confronted you with something you didn't really want to hear — perhaps a teacher, parent, friend, boss or colleague. How do you normally respond when someone tells you something uncomfortable but necessary? Do you tend to defend yourself, avoid the conversation, explain why they're wrong, or actually stop and listen?



WORD

12 “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ 19 “Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” 24 And as he was saying these things in his defence, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” 25 But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” 28 And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

Acts 26:12–29 (ESV)

Read **Acts 26:12–29** together.

Then read verses 14–18 again slowly.

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

“But rise and stand upon your feet...” “I have appeared to you for this purpose...” “I am sending you...”

Ask the group: **What changes between verse 14 and verse 18?**

Paul begins the story resisting Jesus, but he ends the encounter being commissioned by Jesus.



MAIN REFLECTION POINTS

FROM RESISTANCE TO PURPOSE

A goad was a pointed stick used to prod an ox when it resisted its master's direction. The more the animal kicked against it, the more it hurt itself. Jesus' words to Paul are confronting because his resistance wasn't stopping Jesus; it was actually wounding Paul and keeping him moving in the wrong direction. Paul wasn't casually opposed to Jesus. He was passionate, religious and deeply sincere. The problem was that his convictions had placed him in opposition to the very God he believed he was serving. That makes the passage uncomfortable for us because resistance to God doesn't always look like obvious rebellion. Sometimes it sounds like, “This is just who I am,” “This is how we've always done it,” “I'm not ready,” “I need more time,” or “What will people think?” Sometimes the thing Jesus is confronting isn't our passion but the **direction of our passion**. And Jesus doesn't simply tell Paul what to stop doing. He gives him somewhere to go. **Confrontation becomes transformation, and transformation becomes commission.**

1. RISE AND STAND

Jesus says, “**Rise and stand upon your feet.**”

Paul doesn't receive a five-year plan. He is still blind, still processing what has happened, and has no idea what his future is going to look like. Yet Jesus gives him a clear first response: stand. We can easily imagine ourselves saying, “Once I have enough faith, enough confidence, enough knowledge or enough strength, then I'll obey.” But Jesus doesn't wait for Paul to become sufficient before giving him the assignment. Sometimes **the strength doesn't arrive before the step; the strength arrives with the step**. The opposite of kicking against the goads isn't trying harder. It is taking our stand with Jesus — identifying with Him, trusting Him, obeying Him, belonging to Him and representing Him.

Discuss

Where might you be waiting to feel ready before obeying God?

What would it look like for you to simply “rise and stand” in that area?

2. UPON YOUR FEET

Jesus doesn't just tell Paul to stand; He gives him what he needs to stand.

Paul's qualifications didn't suddenly become greater on the Damascus road. What changed was his dependence upon Christ. As Acts 1:8 reminds us, the Holy Spirit gives power so that we can be witnesses. The purpose of that power isn't to make us impressive Christians, control the room or make everyone agree with us. **Power is given for witness**. We don't have to manufacture strength or carry the assignment in our own ability. Jesus is sufficient, and the Holy Spirit empowers us for what He has called us to do.

MAIN REFLECTION POINTS

Discuss

What is the difference between trying to be strong enough for God and learning to depend on God's strength?

Where are you currently relying more on your own ability than on the Holy Spirit?

3. APPOINTED AND ANOINTED

Jesus tells Paul, “**I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness.**” Paul's encounter with Jesus is immediately connected to mission. Jesus doesn't simply save Paul from his old life; He sends him into a new one. His transformation has a purpose beyond himself: Paul is now called to carry the message of Jesus to other people. But there is another freedom in this passage that we can easily miss. Paul is responsible for his **witness**, but he is not responsible for controlling the **response**. He can preach. He can reason. He can persuade. He can speak courageously. But he cannot make Agrippa believe. That means we don't have to manipulate people into responding to Jesus. We don't have to carry the pressure of making someone agree with us, come to church or make a particular decision. Our responsibility is faithful obedience; the outcome belongs to God. **Faithfulness is measured by obedience, not applause.**

Discuss

How much of our fear in sharing Jesus comes from wanting to control how people respond?

What would change if you genuinely believed, “I am responsible for the witness, but I am not responsible for the response”?

WHAT ARE THE GOADS IN OUR WORLD?

Your message identified several ways Jesus may be confronting and redirecting His people today: the pressure of a post-Christian culture, our discomfort with people who don't look or think like us, our need to be right, the sedative of comfort, the neighbour we keep walking past, the next generation, unanswered prayer and the call of mission itself.

Take a moment to consider these questions:

Which of these feels most like a “goad” for you right now?

Where might Jesus be asking you to stop resisting and start responding?

And perhaps most importantly:

What might Jesus be turning you toward?

Because the goad isn't simply about what Jesus wants you to stop doing. It may be the very thing He is using to turn you toward His purposes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LIFE GROUP ACTIVATION — ONE STEP

Take a couple of minutes in silence and ask Jesus three questions:

What are You confronting in me?

Where are You asking me to stand?

Who are You sending me toward?

Don't try to work out the whole journey. Identify **one next step of obedience**.

It might be a conversation you need to have, an apology you need to make, someone you need to forgive, a person you need to listen to, an invitation you need to extend, a habit you need to surrender, or a place where you need to stop hiding your allegiance to Jesus.

Then write down this sentence:

“My next step of obedience is _____.”

Share it with someone in the group if you're comfortable, and ask them to pray for you this week.

MISSIONAL CHALLENGE

This week, don't try to change your entire life. Simply take the next step Jesus has made clear.

Look for the person God has already placed within your world — a friend, neighbour, classmate, colleague, family member,