

**God can Transform the Most Unlikely...**

One of the many things we can learn from Saul's conversion is that God can and will transform the most unlikely people for His glory. We see this throughout Jesus' ministry as He chose fishermen for disciples, tax collectors for lunch buddies, and diseased and rejected for His gift of healing and love. In fact, we see God choose the most unlikely of suspects to fulfill His will throughout the entire Bible. Simply put, God desires to use those who seem the least amount capable or "worthy" because it demonstrates His power, His love, and His desire to see all used for His glory. The fact that the most ruthless persecutor of the church became one of the most influential men in the history of the New Testament shows that the power found in the truth and beauty of Jesus Christ has the capability to change anyone, no matter how far they may be from the Messiah.

1. What labels have been given to you, either by others or by yourself? Do you, in turn, ever place labels on other people? How do these labels affect your life and relationship with Christ?
2. Are there any people in your life (family, friends, coworkers, or even yourself) that seem "beyond the point" of being saved?
3. How does this attitude affect the way you interact with these people? How might you treat someone who has faith in Jesus versus someone who is a doubter or seeker?
4. What truth about Jesus are you failing to recognize if you believe someone is incapable of being transformed by His goodness? How should we respond?
5. Was there ever a time in your life when you felt that you were beyond the point of being saved or used for God's glory? How did your transformation take place? Where are you today by God's grace?

**...When You Least Expect It...**

The conversion for Saul happened at literally the worst time for his career. He was "climbing the corporate ladder", a devout Jew, strong in the Old Law, and determined to protect it. All who knew Saul feared him and labeled him as the "destroyer" of the early church as he 'went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.'" Simply put, Jesus didn't give up on Saul, and never can we give up on those around us, including ourselves. God hasn't and never will give up on us. He hasn't given up since we turned away from Him in the Garden. He's pursued His people since creation, throughout the entire Old Testament - through thousands of years, hundreds of wars, and hundreds of prophets and kings. He pursues us so much so that He sent His only Son to die for us, understanding that was the only way *not* to give up on us. We're image bearers of Jesus, and just as Jesus pursued those far from Him during His ministry, so too should we pursue those who need the life-transforming gift of the Gospel.

1. In what ways has God consistently pursued you before and after your acceptance of Jesus?
2. In the same way, how should we, as image bearers of Jesus, pursue those who are far from Christ and need His life-giving, life-changing grace?
3. Do you feel like God may have placed specific individuals in your life so that you can influence them for His glory? In what ways can you consistently pursue these people?
4. Are you ever tempted to "give up" on others? What reasons typically trigger this feeling? Have you ever felt like God would have been justified in giving up on you or others? What does God's constant pursuance say about Him?
5. Where would you be today without Christ's pursuance? Where could "that person" end up without yours?

**...By His Strategic Plan**

Ananias was in Damascus in a strategically designed time in order to greatly influence the transformation of Saul and trigger the explosion of the early church. The Lord called Ananias to seek and place his hands on the blind Saul. Despite knowing the reputation of the persecuting Saul, Ananias obeyed the Lord and did as he was commanded. In doing so, Paul “began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is indeed the Son of God!’” In the same way, God will place others strategically in the lives of His people to point them to the life-giving truth of the Gospel. That person may be, and likely is, you. The world around us has a way of putting labels on us, or causing us to put labels on ourselves. Luckily, God has a mission for us that pales in comparison to what we or others could even dream to be feasible. Only by His strategic plan and the power of the Holy Spirit entering our hearts can we become missionaries for Christ in our families, relationships, workplace, surrounding community, and world. Serving on that mission is a privilege and honor, one so great that we should be in constant prayer for the Holy Spirit to influence our lives. Typically, if we *look* to be on mission, *desire* to be on mission; well soon we’ll *be* on mission.

1. Do you sometimes doubt if God can use you in your current situation? Does it seem difficult to be used for His glory in your current social network, workplace, or even family?
2. Do you believe that God has a mission-driven purpose for all of His people? If so, what are you failing to see in yourself or others that God clearly sees in your current opportunity?
3. Who around you do you have the potential to “open blind eyes” to Jesus, but may require a risk like that of Ananias and Saul? Does your faith in God’s strategic plan override that fear?
4. In what ways do you (or can you begin to) look to be on mission and desire to be on mission in your current position in life? In what ways can your community group become on mission for your surrounding area?

**Prayer Focus**

- That we would begin to see the God-driven potential in all whom we interact with, including ourselves
- That we would live as image bearers of Jesus in our pursuance of those around us
- That we would trust God’s strategic plan and purpose that He has for our lives, including current situations that may seem bleak leading to a dead end