



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

On the Road to Damascus May 4-6, 2019

Acts 9:1-19) Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest {2} and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. {3} As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. {4} He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" {5} "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. {6} "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." {7} The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. {8} Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. {9} For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. {10} In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. {11} The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. {12} In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." {13} "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. {14} And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." {15} But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. {16} I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." {17} Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." {18} Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, {19} and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For the Kids: What do you think Jesus taught Saul on the road to Damascus? **That Saul was wrong for not believing in Jesus; that Jesus was resurrected from the dead; that Jesus still loved and forgave Saul and now had a better mission for him to carry out.**

1. Do you require corrective measures (e.g. glasses, contacts, surgery) to see clearly? Name one thing/situation that you have especially appreciated being able to see clearly.

Ducks at a distance!

2. Did Saul actually see the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (or only a bright light)? (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8)

He saw Jesus himself. Luke implies it; Paul states it. (This is one of the criteria for being an Apostle.)

3. Why do you think that Saul was so opposed to Jesus and his followers? (Give at least three reasons.) **1. Jesus appeared to be disregarding the Laws of Moses. 2. Saul's self-righteousness rebelled against Jesus' call to repentance. 3. Saul wanted to maintain the power/status of the Jewish hierarchy he belonged to. 4. Jesus claimed to be God. Saul saw that as blasphemy. 5. Saul thought he was the one defending the God of the Patriarchs. 6. Saul thought that Jesus was condoning the sins of the prostitutes and tax-collectors. 7. Satan controlled Saul's heart.**

4. Agree/disagree: Saul did not hate Christ; he hated Christians. **Disagree. To hate/oppress Christians for what they believe (not for their sins) is to hate Jesus. Christians are the body of Christ.**

5. In what way did Ananias' actions (v.11-19) require faith, not reason? **Logic and experience would say to stay away from a renowned Christian-killer. Ananias put his fate in God's hands, trusting in God's ability to protect him (and/or in God's ability to change Saul's heart).**

6. Agree/disagree: According to v. 16, God would cause Saul to suffer for his persecution of Christians. **Disagree. The suffering Saul would endure would not be a punishment for past sins. It would be evidence of Satan's opposition to Saul's new message/faith. It would be a form of the cross that all Christians must carry. (Note: God doesn't sugarcoat what's coming for Paul.)**

7. Where do you fit in this story? (In what way are you like Saul? Ananias? Saul's companions?) **Saul: We've all taken pride in our own rightness, mistreated the innocent, thought we were doing God's will, assumed our religious actions earned God's favor. We all deserve to be condemned for our sinful attitudes and actions. And yet, God has shown us mercy in Christ. He has forgiven us and called us into his service. God has worked a miracle for/in us. God's grace empowers our lives.**

Ananias: There are times when God asks us to do/endure things we don't understand. He asks us to simply trust him. We are tempted to write off people who we assume are "beyond God's reach." Yet we can learn to trust that the gospel can work miracles in human hearts and lives. For whom can we play the role of Ananias?

Saul's companions: Sometimes we're kind of oblivious to the work that God is doing in someone else's life. We don't understand the Big Picture, but we can still extend a hand to a blind man

8. The most powerful thing that Jesus showed to Saul (and you) is God's grace. Explain. Certainly Jesus showed Saul his powerful glory there on the road. But what made the difference in Saul's life was the fact that Jesus did not treat Saul as his sins deserved. Paul realized that his alleged righteousness gained him nothing, but God's grace gave him everything (cf. Philippians 3:4-11).

9. How did Saul's past (including this event) equip Saul for what the Lord had in mind for him to do? (cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-17)

Saul's training and knowledge of the OT scriptures would serve him well, esp. when evangelizing Jews. The passion that Saul once had for following (his misguided understanding of) God's will would be used by God, after the Holy Spirit had straightened out his heart and mind. Finally, no one would better appreciate grace than the man who was once named Saul.