



**Educate
+ Engage**



THE GIFT NO
ONE WANTS: ~~TH~~

Blinded

OVERVIEW

Paul often faced pain points—times and even seasons of life that were extremely difficult. However, even in the midst of pain, whether being blinded, shipwrecked, or even jailed, God used it to get glory out of his story. Though pain is the gift nobody wants, God is with us through it and uses it for a purpose.

Scripture Passage

Acts 9:19–24 (NLT)

Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is indeed the Son of God!" All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus' followers in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And didn't he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?" Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. After a while some of the Jews plotted together to kill him. They were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him, but Saul was told about their plot.

EDUCATE

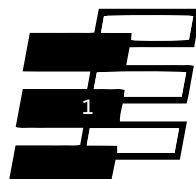
Point 1: Your past doesn't have to determine your future.

Saul is first mentioned in Acts 7 as the people were removing Stephen and putting him to death. Saul was just a young man and was really only a keeper of the coats during the death of Stephen.

Interesting enough, Stephen prayed, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" (Acts 7:60). And with those final words, he died.

Discussion Question: Do you think this prayer had an impact on God blinding Saul and trying to reach him on his journey to Damascus?

Chapter 8 starts with mentioning Saul as a witness and how he was in agreement with the killing of Stephen. This put Saul in action to persecute the church. He went everywhere seeking to imprison both men and women who were Christians.



Lesson 1

Saul sought to engage others in Damascus to persecute the church. His goal was to bring Christians back to Jerusalem from Damascus in chains.

Discussion Question: Why do you think Stephen's death planted seeds in Saul's heart to persecute the church?

As Saul was traveling to Damascus, a light from Heaven shone down on Saul, and the Lord spoke, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4).

Saul answered, "Who are you, lord?" (Acts 9:5).

The voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:5).

When Saul opened his eyes, he discovered he was blind. He had to be led to Damascus by hand.

The point we learn from this part of Saul's journey is that it doesn't matter how we view someone, God can always use them.

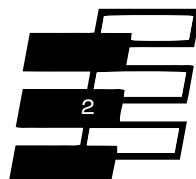
How many times have you been scared to invite someone to church or witness to a neighbor because of their background or lifestyle? The next time fear starts to stop you, remember Saul was the chief of sinners, yet God stopped him to reach for him on his journey to persecute believers.

Point 2: Understanding from the Lord trumps relationships.

Saul had two relationships to overcome in order to fulfil the mission God was now going to give him.

The first was the person God was sending to help him, Ananias. God spoke to Ananias and directed him to Saul. Ananias has doubts and fears of Saul. He had heard all the terrible things Saul had been doing to the believers in Jerusalem.

The Lord shared with Ananias the mission he was giving Saul before he ever shared it with Saul. The Lord told Ananias, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15).



Lesson 1

The Lord had to instruct and help Ananias to get him in position to trust Saul wasn't going to take his life.

Discussion Question: How would you feel if God asked you to go and witness to the most notorious sinner in your area?

The second relationship God had to help Saul overcome was that of other believers. Christians are known for having overcome many things in their own lives. We believe you can overcome and be redeemed. It's a whole new level to believe God can change someone's life that was seeking to kill you.

That take a lot of faith!

Point 3: Blindness brought faith in God. Although Saul didn't want blindness, it brought salvation.

Being blinded on the road to Damascus was a first step in Saul's journey to becoming who God created him to be.

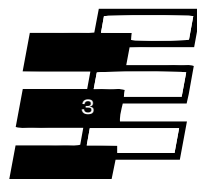
I'm sure being blinded made him scared and afraid. Then when he regained his sight, he probably noticed how others in the room looked at him. Ananias surely doubted he wasn't there to kill him. The other believers surely took some convincing.

Sometimes in our weakest and hardest moments we have the most trouble seeing how God is still in control.

Discussion Question: What is a time in your life when you struggled to see how God was in control? How did He work it out?

God had to perform a miracle in Saul's life to show him truth. Before Saul could go on to write much of the New Testament, he had to have this moment where God brought him to his knees with the revelation of who is God.

The miraculous power of God was evident that day when Saul was blinded. He couldn't deny the power and miraculous hand of God. Then when Ananias approached as a believer, Saul understood this wasn't a coincidence, but the hand of God.



Lesson 1

Saul didn't want to be blinded, but at the end of his life, if you would have asked him if it was necessary, I think he would have said yes. It helped change the trajectory of his life and helped put him on the path of truth.

Closing

Sometimes the journey we have to take doesn't always make sense to us in the moment. When God blinded Saul and brought him to his knees, you would think it probably wasn't necessary. When Saul's sight was restored and he could see how others looked at him, he probably didn't understand why believers were having trouble believing he was a new man.

Through the blindness God was able to get Saul's attention. Through the scaredness of the believers, Saul was able to relate because of what he had to go through.

Salvation came to his house because of his journey.

ENGAGE

As we pray, I want us to take a look at our lives and how God has been trying to get our attention. What has he been trying to use to prepare you for your future?

