

STUDY GUIDE

for the week of 7/7 thru 7/13
Acts 9:1-9



WHATS THE STORY?

As Paul continues his persecution of the church, the resurrected Jesus appears to him, questioning his motivations for his actions and turning Paul's whole life and beliefs on their head.

LECTIO DEVINA

Prepare: Find a calm and quiet place to read and absorb the passage.

Read: Read through the passage. Listen for any words or phrases that jump out and listen for what God has to say.

Reflect: Try to understand what God could be saying to you through this passage.

Respond: Journal or pray to God, communicating about what you think God was telling you through Scripture.

Rest: Spend time contemplating, allowing God to work.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Has God ever opened your eyes to something you were once blind to?
- How would Christians respond to organized persecution today?



FAMILY STUDY

Discuss: What is something you once thought about God that God has reshaped in you?

How would you react if you saw the risen Jesus?

What do you think Paul felt in this moment?

A Deeper Look

Paul takes it upon himself to lead the persecution of the fledgling community in Judea that declares Jesus as the Lord and Messiah over all. As Paul is traveling to Damascus in order to root out any followers of Jesus in that city, Jesus appears to him, asking him why it is that he is persecuting him.

To fully understand this story, there are two contextual realities we must understand: one that comes from within Scripture, and one that comes from history. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul lists the people to whom Jesus appeared to after his resurrection. At the conclusion of his list, he says this: "and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:8) Paul's purpose in this text is to both solidify his calling as an apostle and also to humbly submit himself as the last and least of those sent by Jesus, but this verse also relays something important about how Paul viewed his own encounter with Jesus: this was no mere vision, but a real encounter with the resurrected Christ. Paul's confrontation with the reality of what he had been persecuting others for professing caused his whole understanding of the situation to turn on its head.

But just as importantly is to understand what is happening in Judaism around this time. The Jewish people believed a Messiah was coming; but they didn't think it would be a Messiah like Jesus. Paul wanted to stamp out this movement because he didn't like the sort of Messiah that Jesus was. But this event reshaped what we believed because he was confronted with the truth of the risen Christ. To call this a conversion isn't totally accurate: it was, instead, a new way of understanding the things that he already believed and thought. And in that way, it brings new relevance to our own lives.