



## LESSON ONE: THE CALL TO FAITH

*Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Columbus, OH  
September 23, 2018*

### RELATING TO THE WORLD'S STORY

Everyone has a story. Usually the topic of their story is what they are most passionate about. It could be an event, an achievement, or the direction their life has taken. But things change. Life's journey often takes us in directions, into a new story, we may not have expected—especially if we are on the wrong path.

- 1) What is the world around us most passionate about? Discuss the topics and activities that most engage the hearts and conversations of the people in your community.

*"Chief of Sinners  
Though I Be"*

CW 385

### LEARNING FROM PAUL'S STORY

The events from Acts 16 depicted in *To the Ends of the Earth* bring us right into the middle of Paul's journeys. He risked even his own life to tell people about Jesus. It was what he was passionate about. But that wasn't always the case.

- 2) Read Paul's story when he was known as "Saul" in the sections of Scripture listed below. Then list 3-4 words or phrases that you would use to describe Saul at this time in his life.

 Acts 6:8 – 7:1

 Acts 7:51 – 8:4

 Acts 9:1-2

#### Want to learn more?

*Paul describes himself  
before his conversion:*

Acts 22:2-5

Acts 26:4-5,9-11

Galatians 1:13-14

Share and compare your list with someone seated behind or in front of you. Choose one word or phrase that you think best describes Saul.

Saul (Paul) once thought his life was so much better than others—more dedicated, more upright, more righteous. He was a fiery defender of the purity of his religion. It led him to become an extremist, a terrorist to the Christians. Saul thought he was doing God’s will (cf. Philippians 3:4-7). He didn’t realize that he was actually working against God, “persecuting Jesus” because he persecuted Jesus’ people. But God has a way of intervening even in the most unlikely lives to accomplish his purpose.

- 3) Read the story of Paul’s conversion and commission in  Acts 9:3-9, and watch the first segment of  *To the Ends of the Earth* (start to 2:10).

How does Saul’s encounter on the road to Damascus answer those who claim that “it doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere”?

**Want to learn more?**

*Paul describes his conversion and calling:*

Acts 22:6-16

Acts 26:12-18

- 4) Read Paul’s comments in the passages below. Then describe how getting to know Jesus changed his mindset—his view of himself, of God, and of others.

 “For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

 “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” (1 Timothy 1:13-16).

**Want to learn more?**

*People God calls:*

Genesis 12:1-4

Romans 1:1-7

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

- 5) How do you usually describe yourself to others? How might you change the description to reflect the outlook Paul gained? How will it reveal what you think about God, about yourself, about others?

6) Discuss with the same partner as before how you might use Paul's story to talk to the following:

- Someone who thinks that, because they are a good person, they don't need God
- Someone who thinks, because they are a bad person, God couldn't want or love them

## TELLING YOUR STORY

In groups of about four people, choose and discuss one of the following three questions:

- 7) What amazing conversion stories have you witnessed or heard— "impossible people" coming to faith? Explain how it is by God's grace alone that you can call Jesus your Savior.
- 8) Trace and describe your personal journey to faith (may go back many generations for some). If you meet people like Saul, how could you make use of their story and yours to eventually lead to telling Jesus' story?
- 9) When is it helpful and when is it harmful to criticize or condemn the ways or beliefs of others?

Paul was living proof that God's grace and power are beyond measure. God changed Paul's pride into humility. No matter how far people have fallen or been deceived, no one is beyond rescue. And God not only rescues us from something... but also to something—to fulfill his purposes and plans. (See Philippians 2:13 and next week's lesson.)

### THIS WEEK:

- *Learn this Bible Story to share: **Forgiveness for King David** (2 Samuel 12–13, Psalm 51).*
- *List one or more people you know who appear to be working against God. Pray that God would lead them to see Jesus as clearly as Paul did, and if possible, that God would use you to reach them.*

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