

*Faith of Ananias*

1 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. 2 He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. 3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

7 The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! 8 Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. 9 He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

10 Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

11 The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. 12 I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

13 "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! 14 And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

15 But the Lord said, "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. 16 And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

17 So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. 19 Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

Acts 9:1-19 (NLT)

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\* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word."

**Observation** (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

**Discussion/Topic Starters** (Ice Breakers)

- What is the one thing/person/place God could call you to that you would be the most apprehensive about going
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

**v.1-9** (this section could be discussed the entire time together. This guide is written to focus more on v.10-19, but lead your group as you feel the Spirit is moving)

- O: Discuss Saul and what has been driving Saul up to this point in the scripture.
- O: Discuss God's heart, strength, and actions at this point.
- I: What do you think Saul must be feeling at the end of v. 9?
- A: Have you "written off" certain people as too far from the gospel? Time some time and pray for folks before moving on.

**v.10-19** (Note: the Smaller Italic sections below are "answer starters".... I would recommend you not use them at first, let the group first press in on their own to the question)

- O: Discuss who Ananias was (also see Acts 22:12). Discuss what we know about him (believer/disciple, good reputation even among non-Christians), as well as what we don't know about him (his role in the church, gifts, etc.).
- O: How did God speak to Ananias? Are you amazed by how specific God directed Ananias (v.11-12)?  
Compare that to how God spoke to Paul.  
How does God speak today according to Bible?
- I: In v.13-14 Ananias seems to push back on God, or at least ask for clarity. Do you find that minimized Ananias' faith?  
How did God respond to Ananias after this pushback (angry? relational?); what can we learn about God from this?
- I: In v.15-6 God gives more clarity to ananias as well as insight into the future mission of Saul. Discuss this section, especially how powerful God is (God has the power to choose and change hearts, move kings and others) as well as how God can be good even when He leads us into hard situations and trials (ex. sending Ananias to Saul, foreshadowing Saul will suffer).
- I: Considering what Saul has done to Christians up to this point, discuss how relational Ananias' response is to him (v.17-19)  
What can we gain from how Ananias responds and pursues Saul?  
*(ex. we can't partner with God yet stay at an arms length from people far from God, we should have trust in God and the gospel to change even the hardest of hearts, Bold proclamation of the Gospel is important (ex, lead to a baptism), ...*

A: A lot we can respond to in this passage. What are some of the ways God might be stirring you?

Example Follow-ups:

- How are you like Saul in this passage? Press in, we all have a little Saul in us.
- Pray for folks that you know far from God, that He would get ahold of their life
- Reflect on your heart, do you think God is big enough to reach them?
  
- Be Quiet and listen to God as a group. See if God puts a scripture or a word on someones heart.  
*(this might be awkward for some, that's OK! press in, pastor your group to be still before God and open.)*
- How can we be more available to God as Ananias was? Are you in a position to hear from God and His word on a regular basis?
- How can we minister to folks in a more bold and hands-on way (like Ananias in v.17-19)?

**Recommended Follow-up:**

- Read: Next week's sermon (9/11/2011) will focus on Matthew 13:1-9,18-23. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.