



Near and Now

On purpose – Paul & Ananias

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Warm-up Question

When has God surprised you? Give examples.



Photo by Manuel bonadeo on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

He is an instrument whom I have chosen

Read [Acts 9:1-22](#)

Bible Story Reflection

God's call is hard. It's challenging, and God's call often takes us far outside our comfort zone. So far, that we might not want to go. The story of Saul and Ananias gives us two moments where God's call stretched people beyond what they had ever thought they would do. It's a story that challenges us to reflect on the various ways God calls out into the world and makes us instruments of His love.

Ananias was understandably a little nervous about the call God had for him. He knew Saul's reputation. The city was already buzzing about his imminent arrival and what would happen to the church there. The fear was probably palpable. Ananias was apprehensive at best; fearful at worst. But when it came to it, he chose to believe in the power and [presence of God](#), and so he went. He believed what God had told him, "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). And his response, upon meeting Saul, is telling: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road you were traveling, has sent me so that you can regain your sight and be filled with the [Holy Spirit](#)" (Acts 9:17).

Brother. How sweet those words must have been to the ears of the blind man. How he must have perked up when he heard them. This was not the voice of self-importance. This was not the sound of arrogance. This was someone who was indeed sent by Jesus, one who could speak just a little bit of clarity into the confusion that was Saul's life.

We are not all called to be Paul. We aren't all going to be the one out front, the one leading the crowd, the one who is recognized for their impact. But all of us are called to be Ananias. As we live and move as relational beings in the midst of God's creation, we are meant to push back against injustice and bring about inclusion and love one interaction at a time. We are meant to be looking – and looking with great expectation – for where the sovereign hand of God is calling us to be instruments of love, peace, and grace to a weary world.

Discussion Questions

1. Who, like Ananias, has helped you in your spiritual journey?
2. Which character in this story do you most identify with: Saul, Ananias, Saul's traveling companions, Jesus? Explain.
3. Are there people in the world that you feel are beyond saving? How does the story of Saul's conversion either encourage or challenge you?
4. During Saul's three days of blindness, he also fasted. What do you think happened during those three days in Saul's heart, mind, and soul?
5. Why is it important that we repent? How does repentance make you feel?
6. How does community play a role in our Christian vocation?
7. When has it been difficult to answer God's call in your life? Describe the experience.
8. How does God still speak to the world today? Give examples.

Activity Suggestions

1. The road to Damascus is the beginning of Paul's story of faith. Draw a road and map out who and what have been a part of your faith story thus far. How has your faith changed as you have had these different experiences?
2. Write a thank you card to someone who helped you through a difficult time in your life. Put it in the mail or deliver it to them in person.
3. Spend time intentionally praying for your enemies. Ask God to change their hearts. Write down the emotions this brings up in your own heart.

Prayer Concerns

Those who are persecuted for their faith, prisoners, our enemies, our faith community.

Closing Prayer

O God, you call people to follow you that your purposes might be accomplished. Make me your instrument in the world today. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

