



**“Divine Disruption”
WITNESSES
Acts 9
Small Group Plan**

Harvard Business School professor Clayton M. Christensen coined the phrase “*disruptive technology*” and used it for the first time in his 1997 best-selling book, **The Innovator's Dilemma**.

Examples of disruptive technologies are the personal computer, email, the smartphone, cloud computing and social networking. Each of these technologies completely disrupted their respective industry and eventually replaced the established technology with a revolutionary new product that created a completely new industry.

Disruption may be a new term in the technology world, but the idea of disruption is as ancient as humanity. Stories of divine disruption are too numerous to count as God enters into a life, first with disruption, followed by healing and adjustment, finally leading to a better, healthier, happier direction. This is the case with Saul of Tarsus.

For three intense days, Saul/Paul was blind as he experienced God’s divine disruption. As Oswald Chambers writes:

Saul of Tarsus was turned in one second from a strong-willed, intense Pharisee into a humble, devoted slave of the Lord Jesus.

— from *My Utmost For His Highest*

And as Thomas Merton puts it:

Humility is a virtue, not a neurosis. It sets us free to act virtuously, to serve God and to know Him. Therefore, true humility can never ... prevent us from fulfilling ourselves ...

— from *Thoughts in Solitude*

Saul shows us that anyone can change directions. And as Saul became Paul you and I can become _____ — How would you fill in the blank?

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Saul was a bully — Growing up, who was the bully of your school or neighborhood and how did it affect you or someone you knew and loved?
- How would you explain the intimidating power of force or violence?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— SAUL MEETS JESUS —

Acts 9:1-5

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

- As he persecutes Christians, in what way is Saul really attacking Jesus?
- How would you feel if, like Saul, you suddenly realized that your whole way of thinking, talking and dealing with God was completely wrong?
- Describe Saul's thoughts and emotions during his three days of blindness.

— SAUL MEETS ANANIAS —

Acts 9:6-17

⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. ¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." ¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." ¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord — Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here — has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

- If you were Ananias, how would you react if you were given the job of talking to Saul and helping him through his first days of Christian faith?
- How did God convince Ananias that it was important to go to Saul?
- How does Saul respond when his sight is restored?

— SAUL MEETS THE CHURCH —

Acts 9:18-21

¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

- How would it feel to be a part of the church Saul wants to join?
- How would it feel to receive the kind of suspicion that Saul received?
- Describe what Saul is seeing for the first time from his new perspective.

— SAUL MEETS BARNABAS —

Acts 9:22-27

²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah. ²³ After many days had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, ²⁴ but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵ But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. ²⁶ When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

- Why were Saul's former Jewish associates confused by his change?
- Why did they decide that murder was the best solution?
- Why were some "disciples" afraid of Saul (v. 26) while other "followers" helped him escape violence (v. 25)?
- How and why did Barnabas support Saul?

— SAUL MEETS THE APOSTLES —

Acts 9:28-31

²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He talked and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰ When the believers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. ³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

- What would Saul want to know and what might he ask from these men (Apostles) who had lived with Jesus?
- Saul had watched Stephen die. How is he now following in his footsteps?

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- How can failure be the beginning of transformation? When have you seen it?
- Read Galatians 1:13-18.
- Was Saul's faith transformation and maturity instant and complete? Explain. Compare and/or contrast with the earlier quote by Oswald Chambers.
- Why did God isolate Saul/Paul for three years?
- Close by asking God to help you develop a willingness to begin again.