



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

A FOUR-PART SERIES ON FOUR LIFE-CHANGING ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DIVINE

DISCUSSION GUIDE WEEK 3 (SEPTEMBER 21-27)

PAUL: FROM MILITANT HATER TO FERVENT MISSIONARY

WELCOME.

WORSHIP.

Sing: *Worthy (Elevation)*

WORD.

Introduction: Acts 9 opens with the words, "Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." Little did he know that his planned trip to Damascus to destroy the church and defy Christ's name would lead to a dramatic encounter with Jesus Himself!

Scripture: ACTS 9

Dig Deep into God's Word:

1. Christianity at this time was known as "the way." What do you think is the origin of this name?
2. Why do you think Saul hated Christianity so much? Read Acts 7:54-60.
3. What significance might the author, Luke, be intending by introducing Saul to us at this point? How might Saul be an answer to Stephen's prayer? Read Acts 9:3-19.
4. What is the first question Jesus asks Saul? Why did He phrase His question this way?
5. In verse 10, the focus shifts to Ananias. What does God want him to do? How does he feel about this?
6. How would you feel if God wanted you to meet with someone known for hated Christians? Would you do it?
7. What motivated Ananias to obey?
8. How did Ananias address Saul? What does that indicate?
9. In verse 15, God says that Saul is to be His chosen instrument for taking the gospel to the Gentiles. What would have made Saul a good candidate for this task?
10. In verse 16, God says, "I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Why do think God says this?
11. As demonstrated in the book of Acts, why does preaching the gospel go hand-in-hand with suffering? Read Acts 9:20-31.
12. How did the Jewish leaders react to Saul's conversion? 13. List all the verbs attributed to Saul in vv. 20-29?

WORK.

Apply God's Word:

1. With whom do you identify more in this study? Saul or Ananias? Why?

2. Saul's behavior in verse 20 is totally unexpected. He immediately begins to preach the very faith he once tried to destroy and people were astonished. Think of the most outspoken critic of Christianity on your campus. What would be the impact if they came to faith?
3. What would be the impact on your workplace or campus if you became an evangelist like Saul?
4. Why do you think the Book of Acts talks so much about evangelism? Why is it so important to God's heart?
5. Did God change your life? If yes, do you tell others about how He came into your life? Yes or No, and why?