



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

JANUARY–MARCH 2016

WEEK 7

HEARING FROM HEAVEN

This study guide should be used the week following the sermon it supplements.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 9:1-31

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest² 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. 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—

GETTING STARTED

Invite each person in your group to share a testimony when they heard God speaking to them and how they responded (noting John 10:27 and Job 33:14).

DIGGING DEEPER

1. **Hearing:** Do you find it easy to hear what God is saying to you? What ways does God speak to us? How do you think we can become more sensitive to hearing his voice?

2. **Knowing:** In verses 9:5 and 9:10 Saul and Ananias both heard Jesus speaking to them. Why was the response of Saul, Ananias different? *Hint:* Saul did not but Ananias did know Jesus personally.

3. **Hearing and obedience:** Did hearing from Jesus result in an immediate obedience from Saul and Ananias? *Hint:* 9:13 Ananias was given instructions by the Lord but he responded by telling the reports of Saul and his mission. Do you have examples when you did or didn't respond to Jesus' call immediately? Why was your response immediate or delayed?

4. **Fear:** Saul had a terrifying reputation among the early disciples (8:1; 9:1-2; 9:13-14; 9:26). Ananias in Damascus, as we read in his report to Jesus and the disciples in Jerusalem, were obviously afraid of Saul. How can fear cause us to delay obedience or completely missing out on reaching out to a disciple like Paul (9:26)?

5. **Witnessing:** Paul's radical encounter with Jesus (9:3-5) and being filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17) resulted in an almost immediate and fearless preaching of the gospel. Do you find your witness to the people around you active, fruitful and fearless? Why/why not? What will you/we need to change? See Philemon 6.

6. **Partners in the Gospel:** Barnabas is first mentioned in Acts 4:36 selling his field and bringing the money and putting it at the Apostle's feet. Now in 9:27 despite the fear of the other disciples in Jerusalem he welcomes the new brother (Saul) and introduces him to the other apostles. What can we learn from Barnabas? What kind of disciple was he? See Acts: 13:1-3, 43,46, 50: 14:20; 15:2, 22, 35.

has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 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 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?” 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. 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, q 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.

COMING UP

Alpha Course | 11 Jan-14 Mar

Beta Course | 11 Jan-22 Feb

Belonging Course | 6-20 Mar

Church Prayer Meeting | 23 Mar

NEXT STEPS

1. Our mission is *bringing the kingdom of God to the heart of the nation*. This mission can only be achieved by every member playing an active part. Get into groups of 2-3 and discuss what changes you will make in terms of listening to and walking in obedience with Jesus so that this mission can be fulfilled.
2. Who in your Life Group or in our church can you ‘partner with’ for the gospel, as Barnabas partnered with Paul. Can you commit to going to (partnering with) Pilot Lights once a month with someone else in the group?
3. Pray that God would highlight someone in your immediate environment who can be invited to the next Alpha course.
4. Commit to memorising the following verse this week:

“I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.” (Philemon 6)

PRAYER

- Thank God for calling us into his family and making us co-workers with Christ.
- Pray and ask God for a hearing and obedient heart so that every member of your Life Group and church would know and obediently do the will of the Father.
- Bill Hybels wrote “The local church is the hope of the world.” Pray that the influence of Westminster Chapel grow that we would increasingly become the hope to the world around us.
- Pray for the missional ministries at our church: Buckaroochies, Foodbank, Alpha, Pilot Lights, Try Prayer to see many encountering Jesus and becoming active members of the Chapel.