



DEVOTIONS FOR LIFE

Aldersgate Church ~ St. Louis Park, MN

Week of May 1, 2022 (Acts 9:1-19a)

Prayer for Groups & Personal Devotion:

Generous God,
you have given us so much
to be thankful for, you
provide for our daily needs
and more, you are always
present and ready to comfort
and support us in our need.
Thank you.

Merciful God, humanity has
made so many mistakes over
so many centuries
and slowly we are beginning
to face up to the
consequences.

Our world is over populated,
overrun by greed and power
hungry people, our world is
under pressure to sustain all
the life that it needs to
support.

Lord, you desire justice,
mercy, and peace, and we
long for the day that your
kingdom would reign on the
earth. We thank you for the
women and men who have
answered your call and who
have spoken up for the
voiceless...

Devotions for Life A LifeGroup & Personal Resource

The Story: Acts 9:1-19a

Context: This week we take a massive turn. Not only are we starting in a whole new book, it's a book that functions very differently than John, and we're not even starting in the beginning of it! It is natural to move from the Gospels to the Book of Acts, as the Book of Acts picks up where the Gospels leave off. However Acts is mostly a continuation of the Gospel of Luke (sometimes referred to as "Second Luke"), and because Matthew, Mark and Luke have a lot of similarities, it fits more with those Gospels than John. That said, it is our only account in the Christian Bible of the "Acts" of the Holy Spirit through the disciples after Jesus' ascension.

This season in the Narrative Lectionary we're jumping right to the conversion of Saul, aka: Paul. We do this because we are saving the beginning of Acts for Pentecost Sunday in June.

Contrary to popular understanding, Saul does not change his name to Paul at his "conversion". Saul and Paul are merely the Hebrew and Greek equivalences of one another and are used interchangeably throughout the book. Also, we put the word conversion in quotes, because Paul doesn't really convert. To convert would be to leave his Judaism and convert to The Way (aka: Christianity). He never does that. He merely joins the



...who have defended the weak and powerless, who have shared all they have with those in need, who have given of their time and talents to help those who cannot help themselves.

Lord, we pray that many more would answer your call so that one day there will be a world filled with justice, mercy and peace. Amen.

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Acts of Compassion & Justice:

May Community Outreach

Focus: Pajama Party! The outreach focus for May is collecting pajamas for Perspectives. Perspectives provides pajamas for the children of families moving into their housing. ALL sizes needed, from babies to adolescents.

Perspectives is an organization located in St. Louis Park providing a variety of services to women and their children, and the winner of the 2020 SLP Human Rights award. To learn more go to:

perspectives-family.org



Jesus movement, but he never abandons his Jewish heritage or tradition, just as the disciples don't.

Finally, it is important to note that this passage begins with Saul "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord". If you back up one chapter, you will see this in action as he is among the religious leaders orchestrating the martyrdom of Stephen in chapter 8.

Reading the Story:

This is another story where it is helpful to try to paint a full picture. If it were a movie, what would it look like? What might be happening in-between the lines? What might it be like to be Saul? To be Ananias? Other characters? Read it carefully, paying close attention to what actually happens, and wondering what might be motivating the characters.

Questions for Discussion & Reflection:

- What images, words, or phrases stood out to you in this passage?
- What does it say about this early Christian movement that it was referred to as "The Way"?
- The Lord calls both Saul and Ananias in this story: How do their responses differ?
- What do you think was going on in the minds and hearts of the men who were traveling with Saul?
- How does Saul's experience compare/contrast to the "man born blind" in John 10?
- What might be significant about "three days" (verse 9). In what other places in the Bible does "three days" show up?
- What kind of man was Saul? What are some words that might describe his character, personality style, etc.?
- Can people change?
- What does it mean to be "filled with the Holy Spirit"?
- Why do we call him Paul?

