# TAKEAWAY

## EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE

Part Eighteen: Acts 9:20-31

*At Maybridge we want to be a church of disciples who make disciples – we hope this takeaway session encourages practical outcomes in the lives of the individuals in your group. The focus of group discussion should be on becoming 'doers of the word' and not just hearers or people who enjoy a good discussion!*

### SHARE

- Who comes to mind when you think of people who have encouraged and supported you in your faith? What was it that brought them to mind?
- How might your life be different if you faced danger for your belief in Jesus, or if Christianity suddenly became illegal?

### INTRODUCTION

The book of Acts shares the account of the early church as they take the gospel, which is *for* everyone everywhere, *to* everyone everywhere. In this session, we look at what follows after Saul's dramatic encounter with Jesus and the opposition he faced when he began preaching and teaching about Jesus.

### READ

**Acts 9:20-31**

### DISCUSS

The story of Saul's conversion is quite familiar to many Christians. What stands out to you reading it afresh?

The turnaround in Saul's life is phenomenally quick. He goes from actively persecuting Christians to preaching about Jesus in synagogues in a matter of days! How quickly should we expect change in people who become Christians? How important is it to see big 'overnight' changes in someone who professes faith in Jesus? Is it a good indication of authenticity or not?

The people who heard Saul were 'baffled' because they knew his history. How difficult do you think it is for the church to accept that someone has truly changed? What do we need to do, both individually and as a wider church, to be helpful to someone who has become a Christian?

Saul apparently 'grew more and more powerful' and baffled the Jews by *proving* Jesus is the Messiah (I.e demonstrating it from scripture). As a serious student of Jewish laws and traditions he would have had a very deep knowledge of the Old Testament before coming to faith, and immediately began using that knowledge to share Jesus with others.
When someone becomes a Christian, what are the key scriptural things we'd want to be confident that they know? How confident would you feel about explaining those things to someone else? What would help you grow in this?

When Saul's life was under threat, other Christians gathered round to look after him and ensure that he survived. Christians here and now are rarely under this sort of threat. Why is that? What lengths would you go to to help support Christians here – or elsewhere – who are in danger because they speak about Jesus?

When Saul arrives in Jerusalem, the disciples are afraid of him and struggle to believe that he is really a fellow disciple. How does the way the story unfolds speak to us about how we can best

include people who come from different backgrounds to us – and about whom we may have concerns – and treat them as family?
Saul speaks and debates boldly until his life is threatened again, prompting the believers to send him off to Tarsus. Why do you think God allowed Saul to face such immediate, intense opposition rather than have an 'easy introduction' to following Jesus? Why do you think some people have very comfortable introductions to faith, and others have very rocky introductions?

Barnabas (whose name means "Son of Encouragement") steps in, takes Saul to the apostles, and vouches for him. Barnabas could easily have chosen not to get involved, but he knew that Saul's faith in Christ was genuine and he saw he had huge potential. We will see later in Acts that Barnabas's trust in Saul, and investment in him, is actually critical to church history. He is a great example of someone who doesn't need the limelight but proactively invests in others.
Do you invest time and energy in helping others to grow? What does that look and feel like? If not, how could you begin?

## TRY OUT

- Is there anyone who comes to mind when you think about being a 'Barnabus-like' encouragement to? Pray about who this could be? What steps could you take to build a relationship that is the foundation for encouraging and supporting them? It could start with going for a coffee or an invitation to dinner...
- Of the unbelievers you know, who seems the least likely to become a follower of Jesus? How will you pray for them in the weeks ahead?
- How might you be better prepared to share key scriptural truths with those who ask questions? Is there a topic you need to learn more about or explore further? How will you do so over the next few weeks?

## PRAY

- Pray for the people in your life who are not followers of Jesus.
- Pray for the Spirit's help as we seek to be disciples who make disciples, and that we would be a church that encourages and supports others to grow in their discipleship to Jesus.