

BEYOND THESE WALLS

Intro // Welcome back to students so glad you guys are here! We are jumping into another exciting week of the Book of Acts. Things are popping off!

Recap //

- So far through the book of Acts:
 - Jesus after being crucified, rising on the third day to defeat death, hell, and the grave, has to go to heaven to take His rightful place on the throne.
 - In leaving He promises His disciples another that will come with all power, authority, and will give you power to carry out the main goal for those who are dark to come to know the light of Jesus. The person is the Holy Spirit.
 - The disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to move in power just like Jesus!
 - We see healings, and miracles and the casting out of demons, but we also see the first glimpse of persecution of Christianity. People being killed, thrown in jail, and tortured for their belief and faith in Jesus.
 - Acts is really like a movie!
 - And today we are jumping into Acts 9 so open your Bibles to page ?
 - As you guys are getting there...

ILLUSTRATION // Have you ever played on a sports team, or been in a play, or on the band, or did a group project? All of these have one thing in common, they all require everyone playing their part, everyone playing their role.

- How many people have ever been a part of something that requires a team effort and there are people that do too much, they are trying to run everything?
- How many people know those people that seem to not do enough? (aka they don't do anything)
 - The truth is, everyone has a part to play. The same can be said when it comes to us following Jesus and seeing lives transformed for Jesus.
 - The problem is many times we get our role and God's role in life change and transformation mixed up. We either take on too little or take on too much.
 - But Paul and Ananias is a perfect story of how are roles play out
 - So let's read...

ACTS 9:1-19 - Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers.^[a] So he went to the high priest. ² He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. ³ As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

⁵ "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!" ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! ⁸ Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his

companions led him by the hand to Damascus.⁹ He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰ Now there was a believer^[b] in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord!" he replied.

¹¹ The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. ¹² I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."

¹³ "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers^[c] in Jerusalem!¹⁴ And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.¹⁶ And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."

¹⁷ So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength.

1. JESUS BRINGS THE ENCOUNTER

- Observation // Acts 9:1-4

- We see in this story within the rise of Christianity came persecution and backlash. This is when we start to see a man named Saul.
- Saul was a young man who was well educated and on his way to becoming a rabbi. Saul was a zealous man of Jewish faith. He is first mentioned in the New Testament as being present at the stoning of Stephen, who was the first Christian martyr. (Acts 7:57-8:1)
- Saul is an executor and a hater of Jesus and his followers.
- He encounters Jesus, on his road to Damascus.
- Saul wasn't looking for Jesus but Jesus was looking for Saul.

- Application //

- I want to tell you Jesus brings the encounter.
- In the way Jesus encounters people we have to understand:
 1. Jesus encounters those who seem unreachable.
 2. Jesus, often on your way to another destination, meets you on your journey.
 3. Jesus will tell you to abandon your mission for His.
- Maybe you are in the room and you feel like you don't have a relationship with Jesus. This church service, your friend inviting you to a church event on a random night. You felt like this was just another thing on your way to another destination (fame, your idea for your life, popularity, being the greatest at what you do, riches, etc). But Jesus wants to interrupt your mission and give you something so much greater (eternal life, real purpose, joy, acceptance, grace, love, power)

- I want to let you know that you aren't too far gone for Jesus to reach you and the plans He has for you are so much better than the plans you have for yourself.
- Jesus brings the encounter, Jesus moves heaven and earth to get to you, Jesus is the one who stepped down out of heaven, died on a cross, and paid the penalty of sin so that nothing could stand in the way of eternal relationship with Him. That's His role as Savior. **Romans 5:8 (While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...)**

2. WE BRING THE OBEDIENCE

- **Observation // Acts 9:5-15**
 - Jesus says to Saul why are you persecuting me? Because if you tear down my people who are the body of Christ you tear down Jesus and His mission for humanity.
 - Then Saul goes blind. He can't see for 3 days.
 - Saul was given a direction by God in order to see correctly. To go into the city and wait. So Saul obeyed and went.
 - But then we are introduced to another character Ananias.
 - Ananias was a believer and in the mundane was called to carry out a mission for Jesus.
 - Ananias answered, "Here I am Lord."
 - He is instructed to go to a man named Saul, the persecutor and hater of me and help Him.
 - Ananias is hesitant because of who it is and what he has done but none the less, obeys the Lord.
 - God's role is to set the encounter and give instruction, our role is to respond with obedience in faith.
- **Application //**
 - Whether you are new to your faith, don't have any faith or relationship with Jesus at the moment, or have been a Christ follower for a long time. One thing is evident for everyone when getting closer to God, your next step is always obedience.
 - If you are new to your faith or hesitant toward Jesus:
 - Like Saul, take a step of obedience.
 - Saul was made physically blind, and told to walk where Jesus was calling him to go. This is a perfect parallel to following Jesus. It's going on a journey without clearly knowing what's next. This requires faith.
 - **Hebrews 11:1 - Faith is assurance of things hoped for and the certainty of what we can't see.**
 - Obedience with faith in Jesus is not knowing what the future holds, not knowing where this journey with Jesus will lead but knowing that you can trust in Him with your life..
 - **Illustration // Imagine I blindfolded you and had a complete stranger lead you somewhere? Now imagine I got your mom or your best friend to lead you? The thing is you would care less about the destination and more about who is leading you.**
 - Jesus is trustworthy to follow...

- If you have been walking with Jesus and have relationship with Him:
 - Like Ananias, take a step of obedience.
 - Ananias was living in the mundane of life when the Lord called Him to do something that He couldn't have done within His own strength. To help the very one that was an enemy of Jesus.
 - Ananias responds with "Here, I am Lord". This shows availability.
 - What if our response when we are in school, at work, on our way to do something else, with our sports team, in the Call of Duty lobby, at the grocery store, what if in our efforts to raise money to help people around the world through Speed the Light, was "Here I am Lord". Whatever you want me to do I'll do it.
 - We are often scared to do what God is calling us to do but what we don't see is that God is already preparing hearts, God is already setting up encounters, all He is looking for are people who are willing to go and say "Here I am Lord".

3. GOD DOES THE MIRACLE

- OBSERVATION //

- God shows up in power
- Saul becomes Paul as His life is changed forever!
- Paul goes on to be one of the most influential followers of Jesus in history!
 - Of the 27 books of the Bible, God used Paul to articulate and write 13 to 14 books!

- APPLICATION //

- Whether you are new to faith or seasoned in your faith one fact remains... our role is not to make miracles happen. Only God can do that.
- When it comes to friends and family members being saved, when it comes to seeing our schools transformed, when it comes to seeing healing and restoration in the hearts of people, only Jesus has the power and authority to perform miracles.
- Illustration // Share a story of your personal "Saul to Paul" moment and what obedience looks like for you or share a story of an "Ananias" moment and what obedience looked like in that situation.
 - We all have a part to play.
 - 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 - I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. **7** So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. **8** The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. **9** For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

ALTAR //

- Have students take a step of obedience in faith knowing that Jesus does the miracle and sets the encounter:
 - Salvation Call
 - Rededication

- ***Optional: Speed The Light action step