



Mentoring Hearts, Changing Lives

—AN ATHLETE STUDY OF 2ND TIMOTHY

WEEK 1



EQUAL TO THE TASK

JFK famously quoted the well-known 19th century clergyman, Reverend Phillips Brooks: “Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men [& women]! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks.”

If you pay attention, you’ll see the goal for many people around you—ease and comfort. Yet, ask anyone of their proudest moment or greatest accomplishment, then ask if it was easy. Nothing in life worth doing is easy.

Throughout our study, we’ll be challenging you to take a hard road, to rise above the cultural influences and those people surrendering to mediocrity. We’ll be challenging you to lead. We’ll be challenging you to join in the work God is doing in people’s lives by becoming a mentor; if not today, someday soon.

At several points along the way, you will likely use the word “impossible.” You may think it’s *impossible* for you to change. It’s *impossible* for this person I know to give up their life to Christ. It’s *impossible* for me to speak out or lead. As you think of a million examples and a million excuses why not you, remember that this isn’t something equal to your powers—pray for powers equal to your tasks. God never asks you to do something *for* him that you can do *without* him. He is equal to the task. And in him, you can be too.

ACTS 9:1–9, 20

¹ But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

²⁰ And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Every Week, this section will include bonus material—articles, videos, or other resources to aid you in your understanding of the Scripture, challenge you in your development, or to encourage you in your worship.

Although we will primarily be in *2 Timothy*, several Weeks, like Week 1, we’ll study other passages. Scan the QR code for a great intro to the book of *Acts* to learn more of Paul’s story and how today’s passage fits in context.



DISCUSSION

What is something today that 200 years ago would have seemed impossible?

1. Where was Saul (Paul) going and why? (1-2)
2. What did Saul see and hear on his way to Damascus? (3-4)
3. What did Saul’s traveling companions see and hear? (4a, 7-8)

4. Describe the change in Saul’s relationship to Jesus at the *beginning* and at the *end* of this passage? (1, 20)

5. In what areas of your life does it feel impossible for God to change you?

6. Name 2–3 people you’ll commit to praying for this semester for God to change. If God provides the on-ramp, will you commit to invite them to this study?

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Do you have questions about starting a relationship with Christ or what it looks like to live sold out to him? If you have any questions, talk to your Coach today!



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STUDY NOTES

PLAYING FOR THE ENEMY

Although Babe Ruth started his career with the Boston Red Sox, you simply can't envision the baseball legend wearing anything but those Yankee pinstripes, even though he originally came from "the enemy." You could say the same for Paul. If you've grown up around church, some two thousand years after his conversion to Christ, it's virtually impossible to envision this chosen apostle without a Christian uniform.

Through Paul's life, God modeled the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit. Through Paul's letters, God deepened the faith of innumerable converts. Through Paul's travels, God spread the Gospel across the Roman Empire. However, like "The Babe," before Paul wore *our* colors, he fought for "the Enemy."

GOD CHANGES YOU BEFORE HE USES YOU

Acts 7 records the story of the first Christian martyr who died for his faith in Christ. Stephen boldly proclaimed the truth of Christ, even as men hurled stones one after the other. A young Pharisee named Saul oversaw this execution giving his approval. In chapter 8, persecution arose and *Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison* (Acts 8:3).

Acts 9 opens with Saul's unquenched fury ***still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord***. Saul ***went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus*** to hunt Christians.

As ***he approached Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"*** Notice that Jesus doesn't ask Saul why he persecuted "believers" or "followers." By persecuting *them*, Saul was persecuting *Christ*.

Saul responded, ***"Who are you, Lord?"*** Although the word "Lord" may be used for some important person, Saul wasn't simply being polite. The voice from heaven continued, ***"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."*** Jesus didn't tell Saul everything he needed to know. However, he made two things clear, first, the message is from Jesus. And, second, go here next. Jesus doesn't usually show us a road map of where we start, where we end, and everything in between. Instead, he often acts more like a GPS telling us the turns as we need them.

Saul's experience had witnesses. ***The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.*** They saw Saul go to the ground. They heard the voice and Saul's response. And, they saw their friend become physically blind and lead him ***by the hand into Damascus.***

HAVE HOPE IN GOD TO CHANGE THE LIVES OF OTHERS

Saul's radical conversion led to many believers fearing a trap. However, just a short time later, Saul ***proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*** If God can radically change Saul, later renamed Paul, he can change anyone.

Maybe you've come to this Bible study because you're exploring the claims of Jesus. Perhaps you feel forgiveness is impossible, like you can never change. Our hope is that you encounter Christ just as Saul did. We hope that you understand the weight of your sin and the majesty of God's saving grace.

Perhaps you know that you know Jesus, but you haven't been fully devoted to him. Maybe you've been holding on to a particular sin or putting things in front of your relationship with Christ. Surrender seems impossible. We encourage you to lay those things down at the feet of your Savior. Trust that Christ has more in store for you than what sin is offering.

Finally, if you've joined this study because you love the Lord and walk with him daily, how are you sharing what Christ has done in you? Who is in your life that needs to hear the message of the Gospel? Better yet, who around you seems so far from God that it would be the most shocking to hear they've become a Christian? Will you pray for them? Then, if God opens an opportunity to share, will you take it?

No one encounters the living Christ and remains unchanged. Our hope in these studies is that you might understand that you're not too young, too broke, or too whatever to be used by God. Jesus probably won't tell you everything you'd like to know, but his Word is clear about many things. He has asked us to trust him in the uncertainty of the days ahead.

Likewise, living sold out for Christ may cost you something. It for sure won't be easy. When people come at you, remember that they aren't just persecuting you. They're persecuting Christ. And who knows, maybe your faithfulness will be a catalyst for such change that even your persecutor becomes a great witness for Christ.

We aren't called nor capable of saving anybody. However, we can pray to the God who saves. And we can be faithful to share that "He is the Son of God."

