

Small Group Discussion Guide

Series: Hello My Name Is

Week 4: 9:19b-31

Main Idea: Following Jesus does not remove opposition and suffering from the Christian life, but God strengthens His people through gospel courage, Spirit-given encouragement, and faithful “Barnabas” relationships.

Reference Texts Mentioned in Pastor Seth

Acts 4:36-37, 2 Corinthians 11:24-28

Context

Acts 9 continues Saul’s story immediately after his conversion on the road to Damascus. The former persecutor of the church now begins proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God and proving that Jesus is the Messiah. But Saul’s obedience does not lead to smooth sailing. Instead, he faces confusion, suspicion, rejection, threats, and suffering. The sermon framed this passage around the importance of expectations: when Christians assume faithfulness will make life easy, hardship can lead to frustration, discouragement, or even the temptation to quit. But when our expectations align with biblical reality, we can endure with faithfulness. Saul’s story shows that opposition and suffering are part of the Christian life, and Barnabas shows that God often strengthens His people through Spirit-filled encouragers who move toward the hurting when others step back.

Key Takeaways

- Following Jesus does not mean life will be smooth sailing.
 - Opposition and suffering are part of the Christian life, not proof that something is wrong with our faith.
 - The church must welcome people Jesus has changed rather than letting fear, gossip, or suspicion push them away.
 - Biblical encouragement carries weight because it strengthens, restores, and helps people rise up in Christ.
 - Every believer needs a Barnabas, and every believer is called to be a Barnabas to someone else.
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1. Read Acts 9:19b-22. The sermon emphasized that Saul “immediately” began proclaiming Jesus after his conversion.

What does Saul’s immediate obedience show us about the kind of transformation Jesus brings?

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2. The sermon said that many young Christians may think, “If I’m obedient to the Lord, if I love Jesus with all I’ve got, then my life is going to be smooth sailing.”

Why is that expectation so common? How does Saul’s story correct it?

3. Read Acts 9:23-25. Saul preached Jesus, grew stronger, and then people conspired to kill him.

What does this teach us about the reality that faithfulness to Jesus can bring opposition rather than ease?

4. Read Acts 9:26. The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul because they did not believe he was truly a disciple.

Why was their fear understandable? Where do we need wisdom so that caution does not become coldness toward people Jesus has changed?

5. The sermon said that sometimes when someone with a difficult past walks into church, people may whisper instead of welcome.

How can fear, gossip, or suspicion hinder someone who is newly trying to follow Jesus?

6. Read Acts 9:27. The sermon highlighted the phrase, “Barnabas, however.”

What made Barnabas different from the others in this moment?

7. Pastor Seth described encouragement as something that “carries weight,” “restores,” “strengthens,” and helps people rise up to be more like Christ.

How is biblical encouragement deeper than simply being nice or positive?

8. The sermon emphasized, “We all need a Barnabas.”

Who has God used as a Barnabas in your life? What did they do that strengthened you?

9. Pastor Seth also said, “Because we all need a Barnabas, we need to be a Barnabas to someone else too.”

Who do you know right now who may be hurting, doubting, opposed, isolated, or discouraged? What would it look like to move toward them this week?

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10. The sermon's closing response invited people who were discouraged to bring their pain to Jesus and ask Him to provide a Barnabas.

Where do you need encouragement right now? Where do you need to give your pain, fear, or shattered expectations to Jesus?