

# LET'S DO A SMALL GROUP STUDY Difficult

## Session 2: We Did Easy Yesterday: Coaching from an Apostle

Saul's conversion—and his renaming as Paul—stands as one of the most dramatic transformations in the New Testament. Once a fierce persecutor of Christians, Paul became a man wholly devoted to supporting, proclaiming, and advancing the message of Jesus Christ. His surrender to Christ secured eternal life, but it also came at great personal cost. Paul held nothing back. He was fully engaged in the game, willing to give everything for the sake of the gospel. Through hardship, rejection, and suffering, Paul remained steadfast, compelled by his love for Christ and his calling to make Him known. His life challenges us to examine not only what we believe, but also how fully we live it out.

### **Scriptures**

John 16:33 (NIV®)

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

2 Timothy 3:10–12 (NIV®)

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Provide an example of the most difficult thing you have participated in or witnessed. What made it so difficult? How did things turn out? What allowed you to move forward?
2. Share about a time when you talked about doing something but didn't follow through. Why do you think we often get stuck in the "talk" phase? Now, share a time when you turned talk into action. What made the difference in moving from talk to action?
3. Where do you see people in public places expecting blessings of God while living in a rebellious way? (Example: Living together before marriage but praying for God to bless their relationship.) Where have you seen the Church support immorality yet wrap it in religious language?
4. How can we hold up the truth we have discovered and hold one another accountable in resisting the temptations of immorality in a healthy way?

### **Going Deeper**

1. What difficult things are you currently pursuing with the hopes of a personal payout? Would you consider giving the same amount of energy and resources for spiritual rewards? Why or why not?
2. Are you expecting the blessings of obedience while choosing rebellion in your life? In what ways? Is someone you know living in this way? How can you help them to see the truth of God's Word?
3. Paul transformed from being one of the worst Christian persecutors into someone who wholeheartedly devoted his life to supporting, preaching, and advancing the message of Jesus. While Paul gained eternal life, it also cost him much. Have you had a dramatic conversion

experience that also cost you much, or do you know someone who has? Share this story with the members of your group.

4. *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.* 2 Timothy 4:5–8 (NIV®)

In this passage, Paul is sharing advice with young Timothy. If you had suffered the same consequences Paul had (imprisoned frequently, beaten often, shipwrecked, left for dead, and largely deserted by people), what do you think your message to your children and those you love would be? Can you imagine enduring tragedies similar to Paul's and still telling those you love most dearly, "Do what I did," even though it might mean the same fate? Why or why not?

### **Prayer**

Take a moment to say the prayer below aloud together. Then, keep it nearby to read on your own throughout the upcoming week.

*Father, thank You for Your Word, its truth, and its authority. I thank You for Your great love for us, and that when we were sinners in the midst of our rebellion and ungodliness, You sent Your Son. We choose You as Lord of our lives. Forgive us for our ungodliness. Forgive us for our silence when we should have spoken and for pretending not to notice. We come in humility to acknowledge our sin and to thank You for the cleansing blood of Jesus. We invite You into the midst of our lives today; bring health to our bodies, peace to our minds, and hope to our souls, and with Your provision, fill the days ahead of us. Give us the wisdom to be salt and light in a way that is pleasing to You. Teach us, show us how to encourage one another, strengthen one another, and walk together. May Your name be lifted up and Your Kingdom be extended. May You be pleased with us. In Jesus' name, amen.*



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