

# CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

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– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

## *Jesus Encounters Series*

### “Jesus & The Pharisee” – Acts 9:1-31

#### **FELLOWSHIP**

Western civilization is at the cusp of ideological war. The relativism of the 1960's has essentially died under the weight of failing to solve social ills. The revolt against a Judeo-Christian worldview and its institutions have not resulted in a sustainable, alternative way to answer humanities' crises. As recent events have shown, without the ability to philosophically win, or convincingly reason the culture to their side, ideologues have moved towards tribalism and zealotry. This is not the first time in human history that socialist have tried to stoke the flames of revolution. They seek to gain the emotions of the masses against the perceived few who indulge at the expense of the common. This was the climate of the first century in Judea, where Saul, a religious zealot, was part of groups seeking religious and social autonomy from the institution of Rome and also conformity from their own minority community. As fanatics, they would seek to sabotage the structures of the corporate power of Rome, and at the same time, punish and eliminate the dissident voices in their own, smaller social groups. What a stark contrast then for someone who acted as the chief agitator to later write, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." (Romans 13:1) This kind of change could only come with some kind of radical change or conversion. A complete re-direction of convictions, beliefs, passions, etc. from someone who was so entrenched in an ideological system points to divine intervention. Saul had a lifetime of academic, religious, and political conditioning that was so strong that it literally took a blinding light, and the Lord speaking to him from the sky to stop him. This encounter was an end and disruption to everything, but the beginning of a new passion and allegiance. Many questioned such a change, whether it was sincere. Their doubts were answered as the law of Christ changed Paul's hate for the church into an affection for it.

#### **READ & DISCUSS**

Read out loud together as a group Acts 9:1-31 and discuss any observations that would be applicable to life today. Note how murderous and bloodthirsty groups were to gain or maintain ideological power. How does this contrast with the gospel community?

**Acts 9:31** *Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.*

- *What role does God take in the conversion of Saul? What was most interesting to you about the encounter, e.g. the phenomena or the conversation? Why would Saul's questions to Christ be a good model for us in our encounters with the Lord? Not every conversion is a flash and audible voice in the sky, but how did God get your attention with the Gospel?*
- *What role did the church have in Saul's conversion? List who played a part, and how did each instance contribute to his successful transformation? Who did you have in your life after you came to Christ? What kinds of things did they do with you that helped to start you on your faith journey? How is God using you now in the spiritual development of another believer?*
- *Char Brodersen noted that one of the confirming signs of an encounter with Jesus would be sharing in the reproach he brings. Read again Acts 9:15-16, and then Philippians 1:29. It seems to go against our nature, so why is suffering part of our heritage as Christians? There are a lot of different kinds of suffering, from shame to physical harm. How have you experienced reproach for your faith? How did you respond to it and what was the eventual outcome from it?*

**PRAY** Charlottesville, Barcelona, Ohio, Tennessee, even Maine. These are just the latest places that either verbal or physical protest has broken out. *How can we pray for these communities and ours?*



**Community Group Discussion Guide**

*Based on Pastor Char Brodersen's message on August 13, 2017.*

*Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/jesus-encounters/video/jesus-and-the-pharisee/>*