

# MENTOR 3: PAUL

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: KNOW THYSELF

Have the teens sit in a circle. Go around and ask each person to give their name and attach a descriptive word that not only describes what they are like, but also begins with the same letter of their name. (For example, "Fred is Friendly"). The next person must recite each of the names and characteristics that have already been given before adding one of their own (For example, "Fred is Friendly, Ingrid is Interesting"). The second time round the circle, use the second letter of each person's name. (For example, "Fred is Friendly and Reliable") Keep the thread going as long as possible.

FOR SMALL GROUPS YOU MAY END UP GOING MULTIPLE TIMES AROUND THE CIRCLE. THOSE WITH SHORT NAMES MAY HAVE TO MOVE TO THEIR MIDDLE AND LAST NAMES OR EVEN BEGIN AGAIN WITH THE FIRST LETTER. TO ADD AN ELEMENT OF COMPETITION FOR LARGER GROUPS, ANYONE WHO GETS STUCK OR TAKES TOO LONG IS ELIMINATED UNTIL THERE REMAINS ONE WINNER.

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: WHERE OUR STORIES START

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- When you are asked to introduce yourself to someone new, what sorts of things do you say?
- Can you think of a reason why people might begin by talking about their weaknesses, failures, and sins?
- Are there things in your past or present that you feel can never be put to good use?

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *We like to put our best foot forward. When we introduce ourselves, we usually share affiliations that we are proud of or that show some sort of accomplishment. If we are proud of our family or where we go to school or a team we support, then that is what we share. What we push to the background and avoid mentioning are the things that show us in a less positive or admirable light.*
- *There are two obvious reasons why people might begin with a recitation of their failures. The first is if a confession is in order when one is seeking help. If you sit down in front of a counsellor or priest, you have to begin with why you are there instead of saying, "Everything's great". The second is to provide context for progress that has been*

A NEW CREATION:

# MENTOR 3: PAUL

---

*made. Perhaps you are proud of having performed in the school play. Your new friend will appreciate how much of a success this is if you first explain that you used to be too shy to speak in front of a group.*

- *If something of a serious nature arises during the discussion, take a moment to pray for that situation. Remember this: Jesus’ apostles were not perfect people who were always strong and loyal and good. We have only to look at Peter and Paul. Peter was a violent, fear-fuelled traitor; Paul was an enemy of the Church, hunting down believers. If God could transform their lives and use them to do his work, then he can do the same for us.*

## THE LESSON: ACTS 26

The first part of the lesson can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

Saul of Tarsus – later to be known as the Apostle Paul – began life as a highly educated and religious man. He was respected within the Jewish community and had the advantage of Roman citizenship. And he hated Christians. He hated Christians so much that he hunted them down at every opportunity, seeking to kill as many as he could. Then he met Jesus and everything changed.

Paul referred to himself as one “untimely born” because he did not meet Jesus in the way that the other apostles did. Instead, he met him in a vision, something that still happens to some believers today. But like those who encountered Jesus in the flesh, Paul’s life was completely changed and transformed, and his entire course was redirected: from killing Christians to building churches.

Paul’s life didn’t get easier after this life-changing encounter. His own testimony makes no secret of the fact that he was beaten, whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned. Tradition tells us that he was martyred by decapitation. But we also know that he believed it was all worth it. He wrote: “For my Lord’s sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him.”

While in prison, Paul wrote many of the letters to the early Christian churches that are a part of our canon of scripture today. In them he wrote, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

Refer to Acts 26:1, 9-27.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: ACTS 26: 1-27.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- How does Paul begin his story?
- Has persecution stopped Paul from obeying Jesus?
- What do you personally find hardest about being a Christian? Is there anything in Paul’s story that can encourage you?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *There’s actually a bit chopped from our text for the sake of brevity. Paul begins by talking about his upbringing, but then he talks about the ugly truth of who he was and what he did. The contrast between who he was and who he became makes his story powerful and persuasive.*
-

A NEW CREATION:

# MENTOR 3: PAUL

- *Paul's persecution has actually helped him to do what Jesus sent him to do, which is to preach the Gospel boldly and to build up the Church.*
- *If nothing else, Paul's story can inspire us. It shows us that "with God all things are possible". He can transform our lives, and use us to accomplish great things.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY "AT-HOME CHALLENGE" IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn't make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the "Forms of Prayer to be used in Families," which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don't have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time considering the example of Paul. Ask God to help you to honour him whatever your circumstances and struggles. Close with this prayer adapted from Philippians 1:20: "**Lord, it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.**"

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

*O God of the spirits of all flesh, we praise and magnify thy holy Name for all thy servants who have finished their course in thy faith and fear, especially thy servant St. Paul; and we beseech thee that encouraged by their examples and strengthened by their fellowship, we also may be found meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, BCP PAGE 56)

## 622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

# MENTOR 3: PAUL

## ACTS 26: **“SUCH AS I AM”**

<sup>1</sup>So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense...

<sup>9</sup>“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup>“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. <sup>14</sup>And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ <sup>15</sup>And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup>But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, <sup>17</sup>delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you <sup>18</sup>to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

<sup>19</sup>“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup>but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. <sup>21</sup>For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup>To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: <sup>23</sup>that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

<sup>24</sup>And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” <sup>25</sup>But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. <sup>26</sup>For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.” <sup>28</sup>And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” <sup>29</sup>And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.”