

**PARTICIPANT GUIDE**  
**PAUL – SESSION 1 (Called to Follow Christ)**

**Remember you can join any group for study:**

Mon @ 3 pm – Sandy Stein; Thurs @ noon – Jeff Vamos; Thurs @ 7:30 pm – Sandra Dennis

**Intro**

- In the video, we will visit Tarsus (where Saul/aka Paul) was born; Damascus (where he had an experience of the risen Christ); and Antioch (where Barnabas and Paul ministered together for a year). **HAVE YOU BEEN TO ANY OF THOSE PLACES? IF SO, PLEASE SHARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS WITH YOUR SMALL GROUP**
  
- **Why study Paul?** Adam Hamilton tells us that no other human, apart from Jesus himself, has had greater impact on Christianity and the world than Paul
  
- Of the 27 books of the NT, Paul is credited with having written 13
  
- **When you think of Paul, what adjectives come to mind? If your view of Paul is not positive, why is that?** NOTE RESPONSES – BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE TO SHARE WITH YOUR GROUP
  
- Paul is not perfect as we shall see. He was a man of his own first century Greco-Roman world. Like each of us in our own time, Paul's understanding of the gospel was shaped by his own spiritual and life experiences. Adam Hamilton presents Paul as a heroic figure who sought to exemplify what it means to follow Jesus faithfully.
  
- An important feature of this study is for each of us to ask how Paul's story connects with our own. How might God be calling you to follow in new, deeper ways?
  
- Let's move now to the first video in this series of 6 sessions. This series deals with Paul's *life, message and ministry*. Today's video focuses on Paul's **life**.

**View video (11:41) – you may do this ahead of time**

**Questions for the group**

1. Adam Hamilton said that Paul had "one foot in two worlds." **WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT MEANS? HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THIS MAY HAVE AFFECTED HIS MINISTRY?**
  
2. Paul was an observant Jew reared in a devout Jewish home; circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day; of the tribe of Benjamin; studied Jewish law at the feet of the Rabbi Gamaliel; was a zealous follower of the Law and a "Pharisee of Pharisees." Yet Paul was a fierce persecutor of Christians

individually and of the church as a whole. HOW COULD PAUL, A DEVOUT JEW, JUSTIFY PARTICIPATING IN SUCH VIOLENT ACTIONS? WHAT WAS AT STAKE FOR PAUL?

3. Adam Hamilton believes that it was Paul's personal ambition combined with his zealous religious convictions that motivated his persecution of Christians. He suggests that these motivating factors (ambition + religious zealousness) can be a dangerous combination. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? WHAT MODERN EXAMPLES OF AMBITION + RELIGIOUS ZEALOUSNESS COME TO MIND? CAN THIS COMBINATION EVER BE A GOOD THING? IF SO, EXAMPLES?

4. Paul's conversion was dramatic – some might even say, traumatic. His vision of the risen Christ and Christ literally calling him by name changed everything he thought he knew before. WHAT ROLE DID OTHERS PLAY IN PAUL'S RADICAL TRANSFORMATION FROM PERSECUTOR TO PREACHER? HOW DID ANANIAS FIGURE IN? HOW IMPORTANT ARE FELLOW CHRISTIANS IN YOUR OWN LIFE OF FAITH?

5. Barnabas also is important in Paul's Christian formation. He stayed with Paul in Antioch for a whole year, while the two of them taught and preached. The name "Barnabas" literally means "son of encouragement." HOW DID BARNABAS LIVE UP TO HIS NAME? SOMETHING TO PONDER DURING THE WEEK: WHO IS YOUR BARNABAS? TO WHOM MIGHT YOU BE A BARNABAS?

**Closing prayer:** Holy God, you call each of us by name and ask us to follow you. Help us to see the ways that we can answer your call. Enable us to find ways to encourage each other as we seek to follow Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.