

*Acts 9:15-18 ESV - 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;*

*Has anyone ever encouraged you in something they saw God working in your life, even before you saw it, or have you seen something in someone else's life before they were aware of it? If so, share the experience. This would be a good time to encourage one another in your group.*

### **WRAP-UP**

God had chosen Saul to take His message to the Gentiles, but first God had to get his attention. Sometimes we must quiet the other voices in our lives to clearly discern the voice of God Only then can we finally hear God asking us "Can you hear me now?"

### **Memory Verse**

*Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."  
-Acts 9:10 ESV*

### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Ask God to show you His heart for someone you might have given up on.*

## **"Can You Hear Me Now?"**

**Book of Acts – Week #11**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sometimes God needs to grab our attention and He will use any means at His disposal to do so. In Saul's case that meant knocking him off his horse in a blinding flash of light. God had plans for Saul, who would later be known as Paul. But first Saul had to hear what God had to say to him. Saul had been deaf to God's voice until that day when he found himself grouping blindly along the ground. And finally, at that point he heard directly from Jesus. That's when he had his "Can you hear me now?" moment with God.

### **Key Passage**

**ACTS 9:1-20**

### **STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)**

#### **1. Spiritually Deaf – Saul**

*Acts 9:1-6 NLT - 1 Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. 2 He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them--both men and women--back to Jerusalem in chains. 3 As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" 5 "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! 6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

We were introduced to Saul in chapter 7 of Acts when he approved of Stephen's stoning. It was not because Saul was evil or malicious that he persecuted Jesus' followers. Quite the opposite, he was zealous for God.

*How does Paul describe himself in Philippians 3:5-6?*

*Philippians 3:5-6 NIV - 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.*

*So, we have to ask ourselves, how could someone so devoted to following God's laws have missed what God was doing around him? What was it that made him spiritually deaf? What type of person might be subject to that same problem today?*

When Saul did hear the voice of Jesus, he didn't recognize it. Perhaps he had been focused on the wrong things for so long that he no longer recognized God's voice. It wasn't until his sight was taken away that Saul finally heard God's voice and His direction.

There is no shortage of distractions around us today. If we are going to hear God clearly, we need to remove whatever it is that is making us deaf to His voice. Even if that means pausing from "doing God's work" if that is what keeps us from seeing what God really wants to do.

*What are some of those distractions in life you have had to silence so that you hear God more clearly?*

## **2. Spiritually Responsive - Ananias**

Ananias also heard God's voice.

*Acts 9:10 ESV - 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."*

*How was his reaction different from Saul's?*

But when God told him to lay hands on Saul of Tarsus that didn't match up with what he thought he knew, and Ananias had questions. Ananias had heard from many that Saul was a very dangerous threat to those who followed Jesus, in fact he was perhaps the greatest enemy of their faith.

*How do you feel about questioning God?*

*Acts 9:13-14 ESV - 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."*

*Look at Jonah's response to God's command to preach repentance to Nineveh.*

*Jonah 1:2-3 ESV - 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.*

Nineveh had a notorious reputation.

*Nahum 3:1-3 NLT - 1 What sorrow awaits Nineveh, the city of murder and lies! She is crammed with wealth and is never without victims. 2 Hear the crack of whips, the rumble of wheels! Horses' hooves pound, and chariots clatter wildly. 3 See the flashing swords and glittering spears as the charioteers charge past! There are countless casualties, heaps of bodies--so many bodies that people stumble over them.*

This is a little like God asking a Jew in WWII to preach repentance to Nazi Germany. Would he want to see them repent or suffer judgement? Jonah may have wanted God to release judgment on Nineveh. But God does not give up even when we might. It is only when we are filled with God's mercy and love that we can extend mercy and love to our enemy.

*Who would you find the most difficult person or group to preach repentance to?*

## **3. A Life Transformed**

Ananias not only went to Saul, he acknowledged and embraced God's call in Saul's life by calling him "brother". We can also encourage others when we confirm God's calling in their lives even when they don't see it themselves yet.