

PRAXiS

# The paradox of Paul



PRAXiS

## HOW TO USE

This discussion guide is designed for you, leaders, to guide your group through this Praxis video series. This series is structured as a conversation based around engaging questions intended to promote thought-provoking discussion throughout each episode. When these questions pop up on the screen, hit pause and turn the question to the group. **Each episode includes the following:**

### BIG IDEA

We highlight the big idea behind the episode, emphasizing key scriptures or quotes, to give you and your group an idea of what will be covered in the video. Feel free to share this before pressing play, or after to summarize what was taught into a concise thought.

### SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

If the video question does not invite participation, use these questions to promote further interest. These questions are simply reworded to present the idea in a different way. We invite you to be creative and present the questions in a way that engages your group.

### DISCUSS

The video questions are created to encourage conversation and to allow the formation of thoughts and ideas – inviting participants to wrestle with and begin sharing their beliefs and experiences. This is just the beginning. The discussion questions exist to go deeper and to invite more intimate and transformational conversation.

## CONTEXT

### IN A CHURCH OR LARGE GROUP SETTING

This guide is designed to be used by a leader, so begin by identifying those leaders and getting a guide into each of their hands. If you are watching the episodes with more than 20 people, we would advise identifying multiple leaders and having them focus on a section of the group. When the video questions arise, have them turn to their “small group” and discuss the questions openly. Time dependent, ask each smaller group to share with the larger group what was shared. This invites more people to share without the intimidation of a large group setting. Whether you keep these groups consistent from week to week, or you mix it up, remaining the same for the discussion portion of each episode will allow for greater depth and increased transparency.

### IN A SMALL GROUP SETTING

Every leader in the room should have one of these guides prior to beginning the video. It can be helpful to identify one leader as the facilitator, and others as helpers. The facilitator can guide the video question time, with helpers stepping in as needed based on the direction of conversation. Come discussion time, gathering into small groups where one or two leaders oversee a small group can invite quieter participants to engage and allow for greater depth of conversation.

### AS AN INDIVIDUAL

While this discussion guide is designed with group participation in mind, the content is something we believe is valuable for every individual. We advise watching these episodes with a pen in hand and paper before you. Have your Bible handy and get ready to pause the video. You get to take this at your pace! When Scripture is referenced, open your Bible and read along – when questions are asked, hit pause and write out your answer. If questions arise in your mind that you are unable to answer, write them down to ask later.

## GET READY

Take a breath, the pressure is off. We are not asking you to teach, or to have the answer to every question. Your role is to guide, facilitate, but most importantly to **listen** and **invite**.

### **Invite questions. Invite conversation.**

This discussion guide was created to provide direction for the conversation, but not to limit or harness the group. During the video, listen to what the participants say. Do not feel the need to answer the question yourself. Be comfortable with silence. Give it fifteen seconds before you use a supporting question. Let them think.

“When will I know when to press play again?” Trust me, you’ll know. Conversation will end, or you may even have to re-focus the group if they go down a rabbit trail. If a valuable question or topic is sparked during the video, write it down and say you will return as a group to it during the discussion time.

When it comes time for discussion, follow the pace of the group. Let them naturally guide the conversation around what content stuck out from the video, or what questions were sparked for them. You are not confined to the questions in this guide. Pick the ones that stand out to you or add your own. This time will look different for each group and that’s intentional.

### **Listen and Invite.**

# THE PARADOX OF PAUL

THREE EPISODES | PRAXIS SERIES 6

## BIG IDEA

The Pauline epistles make up a large portion of our New Testament, but who is the author behind these letters? What is his story? What experience is he writing from?

Looking through the lens of the book of Acts, we follow Paul's transformational journey and learn about what it means for us to be changed by God.

Our desire is that through Paul's story, you would discover that God made you with a purpose, and your story (even your messy past and present) has great power. His transforming of us is intentional and beautiful, as He shapes us more into His image, while still using us the way He created us!



# THE PARADOX OF PAUL

EPISODE 1 | A BRAND NEW YOU

## BIG IDEA

No one is beyond God's transforming power.

## KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

**Acts 9:3-9:** As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

**2 Corinthians 11:25-28:** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

## SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **Who is someone you know that was transformed by Jesus? What changed?**
  - How would you define transformation? What does it mean to be transformed by Jesus?

- Think of someone in your life who is a follower of Jesus, what were they like before they chose to follow? What changed?
- **What contributes to us “giving up hope” in someone being transformed by Jesus?**
  - Have you ever “given up hope” in someone becoming a follower of Jesus? What led you to give up? How did this impact your relationship with them?
- **How has God used your natural wiring and gifting?**
  - How would you describe yourself to someone? Now, how has God used those traits?
  - In what areas are you gifted? Do you readily use those gifts for God, or are you hesitant? Why?
- **How have you seen God move in your life, or in the lives of others, during moments or seasons or weakness?**
  - Do you believe God works in our weakness? Why or why not?
  - Reflect on a moment of weakness in your life, did you see God move? If so, how? If not, what can you do to increase your level of awareness of Him moving and working?

## DISCUSS

- **If you have chosen to follow Jesus, in what areas of your life is God at work transforming you? How have you changed? What is He working on?**
  - **If you have not experienced transformation, what do you believe is holding you back?**
  - **Do you believe that “God meets you right where you are at”? What influences your stance on this? Have you seen evidence of this in your own life? Share.**
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## NEXT STEPS

Who is someone you have given up hope in ever coming to faith? Why? Spend time as a group praying for these people. Commit to praying everyday for one week for one of these individuals.

# THE PARADOX OF PAUL

## EPISODE 2 | A BETTER POINT OF VIEW

### BIG IDEA

When we decide to follow Jesus the way we view Jesus, ourselves, and the world is transformed.

### KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18:** Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**Romans 12:1-2:** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**Luke 9:23:** Then he (Jesus) said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

**2 Corinthians 5:16-17:** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

### SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **When in your life has someone stepped in and made a difference?**
  - Have you ever made a difference in someone's life? Share.
  - Have you ever witnessed someone else making a difference? Share.



- **How does this new lens shape the way we experience hardship?**
  - How do we experience hardship apart from Jesus? Think of non-believers, how do they feel or react to hardship?
  - What changes about how we endure hardship when we have a relationship with Jesus? How does this influence how we feel, think and react?
- **Have you ever approached a fellow believer about their sin struggles, or been approached by someone about yours? How did it go? Why is this important?**
  - Why is our word choice and tone so important in conversations like this? How should we speak?
  - What types of thoughts lead us to hesitate to approach people with these concerns?
- **How does your faith influence the way you see yourself, Jesus and the world?**
  - What types of things do you say or think about yourself? Do they align with what God says? What needs to shift so they do?
  - How does our engagement with the world change when we follow Jesus? How are we to interact with culture?

## DISCUSS

- **We can learn from Paul's story that following Jesus requires self-denial, willing obedience, and complete dedication. How would you define each of these traits? How are you doing in these areas? Which is the most challenging and why?**
  - **Kiara said that "*a new way of thinking leads to a new way of behaving.*" Where have you seen evidence of this in your own life? How has your mind, or pattern of thinking, been renewed or changed? How has it impacted your actions?**
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## NEXT STEPS

What is one pattern of thought in your own life that you need to change in order to view yourself, Jesus or the world differently?

# THE PARADOX OF PAUL

EPISODE 3 | TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

## BIG IDEA

When we decide to follow Jesus the way we view Jesus, ourselves, and the world is transformed.

## KEY TERMS & SCRIPTURE

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18:** Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**Romans 12:1-2:** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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## SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- **When in your life has someone stepped in and made a difference?**
  - Have you ever made a difference in someone's life? Share.
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- **How does this new lens shape the way we experience hardship?**
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## DISCUSS

- **We can learn from Paul's story that following Jesus requires self-denial, willing obedience, and complete dedication. How would you define each of these traits? How are you doing in these areas? Which is the most challenging and why?**
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## NEXT STEPS

What is one pattern of thought in your own life that you need to change in order to view yourself, Jesus or the world differently?