

PLOT TWIST

When God Surprises His People

Part 1: *Lord of the Plot Twist*

INTRODUCTION — Can People Really Change?

2 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:13;
1 Corinthians 15:8

- Yes, people can really be changed by an encounter with Christ.
- Yet, God does not override our basic wills, and even those who should know better sometimes choose to walk away.

DINE IN – The Conversion & Commissioning of Saul

Acts 9:1-31

Also see Acts 22:3-21 & 26:4-23

TAKE OUT – I'll Have That to Go Please

TAKE OUT #1 – The Art of Gentle Zeal

Spiritual zeal without gentleness wins battles but loses wars. The Apostle Paul became increasingly effective in his ministry as he learned to focus on winning hearts rather than debates. Arguing is not a fruit of the Spirit. Gentleness is.

Acts 22:17-21; 2 Corinthians 11:30-33; Matthew 11:29

TAKE OUT #2 – The Body of Christ

Jesus continues his physical presence on the planet through his people, filled with his Spirit – the church. We honour (and dishonour) him through the way we treat the people he loves. This, too, is an opportunity for worship.

TAKE OUT #3 – Embracing Suffering

In our broken world, suffering is the shape love takes. Love, apart from a willingness to suffer, is never genuine. Christ-like love challenges all popular notions of love as the pursuit of self-fulfillment and self-pleasuring based on the emotional energy we draw from another. Love is not choosing what makes you feel good, but the choice of what *is* good in spite of how you feel. So when suffering is forced upon us, those who belong to the Way embrace it as an opportunity to display the love of Christ. And we even pursue suffering in the form of sacrificial giving when others are in need.

CONCLUSION – The Shape Love Takes

Acts 9:16

- Mennonite Central Committee
www.mcc.org
- FTC Canada – Associated with Mission of Hope Haiti
www.ftccanada.ca
- Mission 2
www.themeetinghouse.ca

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS

Warming Up...

1. The Bible encourages us to keep our eyes open for plot twists – unexpected ways God brings grace into our lives. A) What are some of your favourite plot twists that you remember from stories, movies, novels? B) Can you think of other plot twists in the Bible? C) What are some divine plot twists in your life?

Look to the Book...

2. Take some time to review our key passage, **Acts 9:1-31**. What verse, lesson, or idea stands out to you the most? Talk about it.
3. Read the retellings of this same event in **Acts 21:37-22:21; 26:1-29; and Galatians 1:11-24**. What extra information do they add? What lessons can be learned?

So What?...

4. Review TAKE OUT #1. Do you tend to be too gentle, lacking the boldness to tell others about Jesus, or do you tend to be too bold, lacking gentle understanding in your approach? Talk about specific situations and, with the help of the group, brainstorm ways you could challenge yourself to grow this week.
5. Review TAKE OUT #2. A) How would your behaviour change if you held this truth in your conscious mind at all times? Talk about specific examples of situations where you need to be reminded and shaped by this reality. B) Is there a danger in the evangelical tendency to primarily use the word "worship" to refer to group singing?
6. Review TAKE OUT #3. How are you pursuing suffering, sacrifice, self-imposed limitations in order to live more generous lives toward others who suffer? Talk about examples of where you are moving in the right direction, and examples of ways you could do better at this Christian characteristic.

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Notes are available online at themeetinghouse.ca/teaching