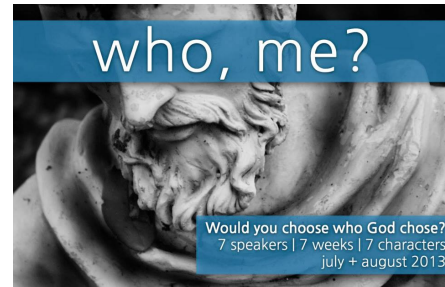


**Who, Me?**  
Saul/ Paul  
Doug Smith



### **Saul's beginnings:**

- He was born into a Jewish family that did pretty well financially, in the city of Tarsus.
- Like most boys, he learned the family trade (tent making) and studied the Torah.
- He was passionate about study and moved away to pursue it.
- This led to an early, deep respect for the Temple in Jerusalem– and saw himself as a defender of the practices that surrounded worship.

### **Saul the Pharisee:**

- The teaching of the Pharisees (a very devout Jewish sect) would form his personal practice and approach to being a Jewish man.
- He learned at the feet of the rabbi Gamaliel, as a devoted and accomplished student (Galatians 1:14)
- Acts 5:38–39, Acts 7:56–58
- He approved the execution of Stephen and began a zealous pursuit to rid the world of Jesus followers. (Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:6, Acts 9:1–2)

### **From Saul to Paul:**

- Acts 9:3–9; Acts 22:11–21
- Saul's road to Damascus experience was an epiphany and resulted in a fundamental recalibration of his life's pursuit.
- Without exception, the greatest epiphany any one of us could have is meeting the resurrected Jesus.
- Flowing from his adoption of truth and the empowerment of the Spirit, he is set free from a misguided past and is directed to love and encourage a world of Gentiles into faith.
- Saul would become arguably the greatest apostle, Paul.

### **Why would God choose Saul?**

- Because he would become Paul
- Because Jesus would meet him and love him to the point of forgiving him.

- Because Jesus saw in Paul went beyond the persecutor to what no one else would or could see – a man who baptized and filled by His Spirit could change the world.

### **Why us?**

- Whether we call ourselves a Christian or not – the principles we learn from Saul apply. Spiritual pride, dead religion, the placement of man over God, sin – all lead to a spiritual darkness and all need the liberal application of Jesus, enough to land us on our backsides and change our life's trajectory.
- Even after our meeting Jesus our tendency can be to look at our past and consider ourselves unlikely, messed up, too broken, too uninformed and under-qualified.

### **But we can learn from Paul that:**

- Our sinful past does not define our forgiven future
- Our qualification is based on our relationship with Jesus, and no matter how messed up we were,
- Our past experiences will be redeemed to help form our purpose.

### **Discussion:**

- How much could you relate to Paul's story?
- What aspects of his story stood out to you most? Why?
- How has your own story resembled Paul's? Share stories.
- Have you often considered yourself unworthy based on your past? Why or why not?
- In what ways can you see how God has redeemed your past experiences?