



# "How did it come to this?"

A Contemplative Discussion Guide based on the June 4th Worship Message

## Welcome to our group study guide on the topic of transformation and self-reflection.

In our journey through this guide, we will explore the story of Saul, later known as Paul, and his profound transformation from a persecutor to an advocate of the Christian faith.

***We will delve into the question of how a deeply committed person can turn to extreme measures to protect their beliefs, and whether such transformations still occur in our world today.*** By examining Saul's motivations, the factors that contribute to such drastic changes, and the challenges we face in our own lives, we hope to gain insight and initiate meaningful reflection on our individual actions and the choices we make.

Together, let us explore the paths of transformation and discover how we can navigate our own journeys towards love, understanding, and nonviolence.



Glenn Schwerdtfeger. *Holding Coats and Ravaging the Church*. Bethel International United Methodist Church. June 4, 2023.

- ***How can the concept of mob mentality influence our individual actions and decisions?*** Reflect on a time when you may have been influenced by a group dynamic and did something you wouldn't have done on your own. What lessons can you learn from that experience?
- ***In what ways have you observed the normalization of violence in society?*** Consider media, entertainment, or cultural attitudes towards violence. How do these influences impact your own perspective on conflict resolution and the use of force?
- ***Think about a time when you felt threatened by change or faced with uncertainty. How did you react to those feelings?*** Did fear lead you to lash out or become defensive? Reflect on alternative ways you could have responded and how embracing change with openness and empathy can foster growth.
- ***Have you ever held onto grievances or nurtured anger towards someone or a particular group? How did that impact your well-being and relationships?*** Consider the power of forgiveness and letting go of grudges. How can choosing forgiveness and healing contribute to breaking the cycle of hatred, rage, and violence in your own life?
- ***Reflect on a time when you felt excessive self-assurance in your beliefs or convictions. How did that influence your interactions with others who held different perspectives?*** Did you try to force them to see things your way? Consider how embracing humility and respect for diverse viewpoints can foster understanding and harmony in personal relationships and society as a whole.
- ***How can you become an extremist for love and justice in your own life?*** Reflect on the quote by Martin Luther King Jr.: "So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?" Consider concrete actions you can take to promote love, justice, and compassion in your interactions with others and within your community.