

WEEK 1: PAUL: BUT I USED TO BE A CHRISTIAN-HATER

Some of us are pretty good at finding reasons why God probably couldn't use us.

It's easy to see our uniqueness as weakness.

The truth is: God wants to use your quirks, your one-of-a-kindness for something amazing.

In this series we'll consider 5 unexpected heroes. God used each of them powerfully.

You will need:

- Pen & paper for each person
- 3 pieces of paper, each with one word written on it so everyone can see. (Paper 1 – 'FROM', paper 2 – 'THROUGH', paper 3 – 'TO')

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- How would you describe Jesus in just one word?
- When is one time when you were absolutely speechless?
- Finish the sentence: "God could do more significant things through my life if..."

DISCUSS

NEW CHRISTIANS

- As a new Christian, have you ever felt envious of people your age who were brought up in the church? If so – what sorts of things have you felt envious of?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- Are you ever envious of people who have testimonies about their previously wildly sinful life? If so – what sorts of things have you felt envious of?



GOD CAN'T USE ME

WEEK 1: PAUL: BUT I USED TO BE A CHRISTIAN-HATER

ALL

This week we are going to look at a guy from the bible who became a Christian after years of hating Christians. His name was Saul. First, let's get an idea of what he was like.

Together read Acts 8:3, Acts 9: 1-2, Acts 22:4 and Acts 22:20.

- What sort of picture does this give you of Saul? (E.g. Aggressive, violent, hateful towards Christians, willing to even approve a murder).
- Saul ended up becoming one of the most influential Christians in history. He wrote more books of the bible than any other person.

Are you surprised that God used someone with that kind of background so powerfully? Why/Why not?

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 1:13-17. This is Paul talking, after he has become a Christian.

- According to Paul, how does his non-Christian background give him an advantage when he shares Jesus with people?

INVOLVE

God moves powerfully through every person's Christian story!!

It doesn't matter if you got saved last week or have been a Christian for as long as you can remember. Your story is significant and can help draw people to Jesus!

One helpful way to think of your testimony – that is, your personal Christian story - is as a journey 'from', 'through', 'to'. We have been saved FROM something, THROUGH Jesus, TO something.

Leader: Place the 3 pieces of paper on the floor so everyone can see.

In Acts 26:4-19 Paul shares his testimony.

Read through this passage together and see if you can identify what he has been saved 'from', 'through' and 'to'.

Hint: FROM – See verses 9-11; THROUGH – See verses 15-18, TO – See verses 19-23

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen and invite them to write out their own 'from', 'through', 'to' story.



WEEK 1: PAUL: BUT I USED TO BE A CHRISTIAN-HATER

Leader: If they need extra guidance, explain that:

FROM = What was life like before Jesus? What did Jesus rescue you from?

THROUGH = When did you encounter Jesus? How did it happen? How would you describe Jesus?

TO – How is life different now?

Encourage those in the group who can't remember a time when they were not saved that this is just as relevant to them.

Suggest that they write about a particular time in their life when Jesus rescued them from something (e.g. worry, fear, an anger problem, a self-image issue, loneliness).

Once everyone is finished, give them an opportunity to share their testimony with the whole group.

APPLY

Ask for volunteers to share their testimony at your next all-age church gathering.

AND/OR

Challenge your group members to share their story with someone this week. Remind them via text message during the week.

LEADER'S NOTES

- If your group is mostly new Christians, maybe watch this testimony together too: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf5WYigZHME
- If there is time, create some space for each person to be encouraged about how their story could be used by God
- We recommend that leaders be prepared to share their own 'from', 'through', 'to' story with the group
- We believe that most Christian young people are actually very keen to share their testimonies publicly – but many need a lot of encouragement, guidance and support to do it for the first time. Persist with young people who say they are too shy or 'don't know what to say'. Give them support as needed
- If you don't have enough time for everyone to share their testimonies this week don't feel you need to rush. Arrange for the stories to be shared in the coming weeks.



GOD CAN'T USE ME

WEEK 2: DANIEL: BUT I'M SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO AREN'T CHRISTIANS

You will need:

- A pen and a piece of paper for each person

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- What is your earliest memory of school?
- What is your favourite month of the year? Why?
- If you had to give up potatoes, pasta or rice for the rest of your life which would you pick?
- In one sentence, what does being a Christian mean to you?

DISCUSS

NEW CHRISTIANS

- Say your school is 95% not Christian. As a Christian would you call this an opportunity or a challenge?

What about it is challenging? What about it presents an opportunity?

- Have you ever been in a situation where, as a Christian, you were in the minority? How bold were you in sharing your faith in that setting? (Did you hide it? Were you loud and proud?)

Read Daniel 1-2 as a group.

- Ask for a volunteer to summarise the story in their own words. Does everyone agree with that summary? Anyone want to add anything?
- Daniel didn't agree with the king's beliefs or way of doing things, but he was always perfectly respectful.

Who in your life do you find it most difficult to respect and honour? (E.g. a teacher, lecturer, school principal, politician, parking attendant).

What does Daniel's example show us about the importance and power of honouring authority figures – even if they are opposed to the Christian faith?



GOD CAN'T USE ME



WEEK 2: DANIEL: BUT I'M SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO AREN'T CHRISTIANS

- In chapter 2, verse 28 Daniel gives credit to God. Have you ever been too scared to thank or give credit to God out loud and in front of people?

What are the big potential benefits of publicly thanking God in front of people who don't know him?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

In addition to the above, you could ask:

- In verse 12 Daniel hears that the king has decided that – because no one can explain his dream - he is going to kill all wise men – including Daniel.

How do you think most people would respond to this news? (E.g. Run away, hold an angry protest, rant to anyone who'll listen about what an idiot this king is).

How does this differ from Daniel's response? (See verses 14-17. He calmly seeks more information, he respectfully negotiates with the king, and then he gathers Christian friends to join him in praying about the matter).

How do you think Daniel got so patient and wise?

- Daniel earns a great reputation and a position of influence and trust.

What would it look like for you to earn a great reputation and position of influence and trust in your school/TAFE/workplace/community?

What would be the benefits of having this influence?

INVOLVE

As a group, choose a context most of you spend a lot of time in. (For example, school, work, uni, home, sporting team).

What are some things you think Daniel would do in that situation?

Brainstorm a list.

E.g. High School

- * Pray for his school every day in private
- * Be a hard working student

WEEK 2: DANIEL: BUT I'M SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO AREN'T CHRISTIANS

- * Show respect and courtesy to all teachers (even if they're anti-Christian)
- * Offer to pray for people on the spot if he hears that they or their family members have needs
- * Speak to people about the God he serves
- * Gather other Christians to pray with him – especially if specific needs arise

Which of the things on your list do you find easiest?

Which things do you find most difficult?

Take time to pray for courage for each person in your group –especially with the things from the list that they find most difficult.

APPLY

Ask your group to share one thing that they are going to do this week based on what they've learned or been challenged about.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Create a helpful atmosphere before people arrive – put some music on, have a few snacks available, have something for people do when they arrive
- Don't forget to set aside some time to ENJOY – have supper, play a game, or just chill!
- Next week we're looking at Moses. Challenge your group to each read through Exodus chapters 2-4 before then.

WEEK 3: MOSES: BUT I'M SCARED OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!

You will need:

- One piece of paper (big enough for everyone to see) and a marker
- One blank gift card for each person in the group

CONNECT

- How much money would it take for someone to successfully dare you to stand on a table in McDonalds and sing a song?
- How do you communicate to your friends / mates that you appreciate them?
 - a) Tell them straight out
 - b) Give them a hug
 - c) Do nothing and hope they figure it out
 - d) Give them a wedgie
- What's one of the toughest things you're dealing with at the moment?

DISCUSS

NEW CHRISTIANS

Hopefully everyone has pre-read Exodus 2-4. As a recap, it would be helpful to have the group retell the story in their own words (from Moses' birth to God meeting him at the burning bush).

Together, read the main sections of the story (especially 3:1-15 and 4:1-17)

- What's one of the most amazing/crazy things you've ever seen? (E.g. lightning storm, car accident, New year's Eve fireworks, flash mob, all-in brawl etc)
- Any ideas why God chose to speak to Moses through a burning bush? How did this help deliver the message to Moses? What does it say about God?
- Why do you think Moses was so hesitant to say 'yes' to what God was asking of him?
- In what ways do you feel like you can relate to Moses?



GOD CAN'T USE ME



WEEK 3: MOSES: BUT I'M SCARED OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!

- Moses had some kind of speech impediment, maybe a stutter or something similar. How do you think this would have affected Moses' confidence? Have you ever struggled from a speech impediment or a fear of public speaking?
- Moses and Aaron both played an integral role in fulfilling this calling God had given them. They needed each other. Why do you think God creates situations where we have to rely on each other like this?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

- What is one part of Moses' story you feel you can relate to?
- Can you think of a time when you felt God calling you to do something and you really didn't want to do it? What happened?
- Do you think Moses would have preferred for God to just fix his speech problem? Why do you think God sometimes allows us to have these 'deficiencies'?
- Moses and Aaron both played an integral role in fulfilling this calling God had given them. They needed each other. Can you think of some other examples from the Bible of God teaming up people to work together and rely on each other's strengths? (See Leader's Notes for suggestions)
- Is there anyone in your life who you get to minister in partnership with? (E.g. another Christian in your year at school who you are working with to see your school reached, your co-leader in Sunday school).

How does this partnership improve your ministry?

INVOLVE

Check out this quote from Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

If you were to combine the unique potential of everyone in the small group you're currently in, what do you think this group could achieve for God's Kingdom? Could you impact your local community? How?

Using the marker and piece of paper, brainstorm together a list of ways you could make a difference in your community.

Make a plan about how you will put one of these ideas into action.

Spend some time praying about this.

OR



WEEK 3: MOSES: BUT I'M SCARED OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!

Can you think of someone in your church who has an important - but not upfront - ministry? (E.g. drives the bus so that people can get to church, prepares the Powerpoint slides or handouts so that people can participate in sung worship).

Take a blank gift card each and write an encouraging note to the person you thought of. You might like to say something like:

'Just wanted to say thank you for the way you drive the bus every Sunday. Your ministry is so important and we value you heaps.'

APPLY

Plan a team building activity to do as a group within the next few weeks. It could be anything, from a hike to making a short film. Here are some tips:

- Something that would require everyone to contribute
- Something that leaves you all with a sense of achievement
- Something that is fun

AND/OR

Ask your group to share one thing they will do this week based on what they've heard or been challenged about

LEADER'S NOTES

- Tip: Team building activities only reach their potential when you take the time to debrief it afterwards. (E.g. when did you need to rely on someone else, what were you good at, what did you find challenging?)
- Include prayer as part of your night. Maybe ask someone to open and someone else to close in prayer?
- Are there any young people in your church who you'd like to see join the group? Ask some group members to invite them during the week.
- Examples of Biblical Team Work
 - * Adam and Eve (Genesis 2)
 - * Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1-4)
 - * David and Jonathon (1 Samuel 19-20)
 - * Paul and Silas (Acts 16)





WEEK 3: MOSES: BUT I'M SCARED OF PUBLIC SPEAKING!

* David and Jonathon (1 Samuel 19-20)

* Paul and Silas (Acts 16)

- Ideas for a team building activity

- * Write and record a song + film clip, upload it and see how many views you can get in 7 days.

- * Go on a day hike with a twist: create hypothetical situations that require your team to work together and use each other's strengths, e.g. someone is blind, someone is deaf, another can only use 1 leg etc.

- * Do Backyard Blitz at the house of someone from your community

- * Play a couple of games of Laser Tag or Paintball.

Check out www.thesource4ym.com/teambuilders for heaps of other ideas, particularly quick, easy, and cheap options.



WEEK 4: MARY: BUT I'M JUST A NOBODY!

You will need:

- A large sheet of paper (big enough for everyone to see) and
- A marker

OR

- A business-sized piece of card for each person and
- A pen for each person

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- What is the best scar you have? How did you get it?
- Would you rather eat a dog, a cat, a guinea pig or a budgie?
- What's one of the most encouraging things someone has ever said to you?

DISCUSS

NEW CHRISTIANS

- What do you think of when you hear the name 'Mary'? (riding a donkey, being a mum to Jesus, pictures in Catholic churches etc)
- What is your general personal opinion of Mary? Do you admire her, pity her, like her?

As a group, read Luke 1:26-56

- What stands out to you most from this passage?
- Put yourself in Mary's shoes. You are engaged and have been keeping yourself sexually pure until you are married. Then an angel comes to you and tells you you're already pregnant. The angel says that the baby you are carrying is God's son – the one they have all been waiting for. What would be your first reaction?
- What surprises you about Mary's response? What character qualities does Mary display by responding in this way?



GOD CAN'T USE ME

WEEK 4: MARY: BUT I'M JUST A NOBODY!

- Giving birth to the Son of God, raising him and teaching him about life is such a huge responsibility, and shows how significant Mary's role was. Amazingly though, Mary had a pretty average resume. She wasn't from an important family, she wasn't an experienced mother, and she was only young (probably a teenager). Why do you think God chose her for such a massive task?
- Why do you think God chooses to use 'average' people when there are people who we would say are more 'suited' to the task?
- What is one environment in which you feel like you don't stand out at all? (school, home, soccer team) How do you feel in that context? How might God want to use you there?

ESTABLISHED CHRISTIANS

In addition to the above questions, you might like to ask:

- In verse 36 the angel mentions that Elizabeth, despite being very old, is pregnant too. He says: "Nothing is impossible for God!"
- Are there things that you have (consciously or subconsciously) decided that God could never do through you?
- Do you think it's possible for us to miss out on something great God wants to do because we consider it unrealistic or impossible?

INVOLVE

The main point here is that God uses ordinary people, people of no worldly significance. Obviously we're not going to try to emulate Mary in the hope of immaculately conceiving the Son of God, but Mary, through her attitudes and character, shows us that God doesn't need us to be skilled or educated in order to be used by Him.

Based on Mary's story, what do you think is on God's Essential Requirements list? On a large sheet of paper that everyone can see make a list of character qualities that are a 'must' in order to be used by God.

OR



WEEK 4: MARY: BUT I'M JUST A NOBODY!

Give everyone a business card sized piece of white cardboard and have everyone write out a prayer that is inspired by Mary. In the Catholic tradition people pray to Mary and whilst our Protestant churches don't do that we can certainly learn to pray like Mary. Here are some suggestions:

- * Limit it to 4 lines
- * Use simple phrases
- * Basis of prayer: God please build these essential qualities in me.

APPLY

Have everyone keep their prayer card somewhere they can access it regularly (phone cover, wallet, beside bed etc). Make a commitment to pray this prayer once every day this week, to pull the card out and read it through silently.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Have you checked out our LIFE Leader's Handbook recently? It'll give you a whole pile of practical advice on how to be a great life group leader. If you don't have a Leader's Handbook, head to <https://my.salvos.org.au/toolkit/resource/life-leadership-handbook/30/> and download a free copy!
- Is anyone missing from your group tonight? Don't forget to ask for volunteers to follow them up!
- Are you developing leaders within your group? Check out the LIFE leadership handbook for some simple tips on how to start

WEEK 5: EHUD: BUT I'M AWKWARD!

You will need:

- Pens & paper for each person
- Laptop & internet connection if you choose to use the clip (optional)

CONNECT

Ask your choice of the following questions:

- Give your day a score out of 10 and describe why you chose that number
- What is the best food decision you've made lately?
- Finish the phrase "I remember that awkward moment when..."

DISCUSS

- Out of the people we've looked at over the last 4 weeks, who do you feel like you relate to the most? What have you learnt from their story?

Ask for a volunteer to read the story of Ehud. You can find it in Judges 3:12-30

- What part of this story surprises you most?
- Do you think this story is awesome or unnecessarily gross?
- Any guesses as to what makes Ehud unique and why it worked to his advantage?

Leaders: Ehud was left-handed which gave him a secret advantage against his enemy. In those days, when people sought a meeting with a King they would have been frisked before entering to check they weren't carrying a weapon. Because most people were right-handed they would carry their sword on their left leg, which meant that only the left leg was checked for weapons. Being left-handed, Ehud naturally strapped his sword to his right leg which meant he was able to pass through the security check whilst concealing his weapon.

- Is anyone here left-handed? What is good about being left-handed? What is difficult about being left-handed?



GOD CAN'T USE ME

WEEK 5: EHUD: BUT I'M AWKWARD!

Back in the Bible days being left-handed was not such a good thing. In fact, in the Bible there are over 100 positive references to the right hand and 25 negative references to the left hand (i.e. the story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25). For thousands of years being left handed was understood as a form of disability and in many languages it came to be translated as 'weak', 'awkward' or 'evil' (see link in the Leaders Tips). In light of this stuff it's easy to see that under normal circumstances Ehud would never have been selected as a leader among his people.

- What do you think is one truth we can take away from Ehud's story? What is God trying to teach us through it?

Have your group watch this powerful clip about a Christian man who was born without arms or legs. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ualbym0hYtY – Nick Vujicic

- What stood out to you most from Nick's testimony?
- Nick says that hundreds of thousands have been saved through his testimony. The result of Ehud the left hander's efforts was that 'the land had peace for 80 years'.

Does this encourage you to believe that your God could use the things that are unique about you for good?

INVOLVE

Ehud was pretty unique. Not only was he left-handed, but he was also a stealthy ninja. Take a moment to think about what makes you unique (physical attributes, personality stuff, experiences).

Write them down on a piece of paper and next to each one indicate whether you think it's a positive, negative or neutral thing.

The cool thing about Ehud's story is that the attribute which would have usually been counted against him is the very thing that God uses in such an important way. God didn't use him *despite* this 'weakness' but *because* of it.

Have everyone share one of the things they think is a negative unique quality about themselves. As a group, discuss how you think God might be able to use each person because of their unique quality.

(The temptation here is to only make up funny Hollywood-style stories, e.g. someone's peanut allergy means they don't eat the poisoned food that kills everyone else but allows them to fight like Chuck Norris. Allow the funny stories but direct them to think about how these unique qualities could genuinely be used for God's glory in everyday life.)

OR



WEEK 5: EHUD: BUT I'M AWKWARD!

Pray for each other, for a couple of things:

1. That we would be able to see ways God can use us.
2. That God would help us let go of the negative labels the world places on us. That the insults of the world would not stick. That we would understand ourselves from God's perspective, that we are beautifully and wonderfully made.

Maybe have every group member pray for at least one other person.

APPLY

Place a comfy chair, bean bag or cushion in the centre of the room.

Give each person an opportunity to sit in the 'prayer chair'/'prayer cushion' and share with the group:

1. One thing they have felt challenged about during this series
2. One prayer request they have (*E.g. For guidance about their calling, faith to step out, confidence*)

Together, pray for the individual on the chair.

Maybe stand as a group and place your hands on your friend as you pray.

LEADER'S NOTES

- Remember to come armed with questions rather than answers. You can guide the discussion with good questions, but avoid just forcing your ideas onto others
- Try to block out some time in your calendar this week to pray for each of the members of your group
- Interesting info about left-handedness – www.theworldofstuff.com/lefty

EXTRA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Optional, off-topic, just for interest sake)

- Do you think that Ehud did the right thing in murdering the King? Does it carry different moral weighting compared to killing someone in battle?
- What about Ehud's deceitfulness in lying about his reason for being there and then concealing his weapon? Does the end justify the means?
- What do you think was God's involvement in coming up with the assassination plan? Do you think it was something God told him to do or was it Ehud's idea?