



In this three-week series we're taking a look at a few key road trips Paul took in the book of Acts. Through his experiences on the road, we'll discover that maybe the best thing that can happen on our journey is a change of direction.

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TEACHING OUTLINE

ROAD TRIP | WEEK 3



SCRIPTURE

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia (Acts 20:1-4 NIV).

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:11-12 NIV).

Paul travels with a very diverse group of individuals in Acts 20, which is a dramatic shift from the Jewish men he hung out with prior to meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul's encounter with Jesus not only changed himself, but the way he saw others as well.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that by following the model that Jesus and Paul set forth in the way they treated people, students can treat people like they matter.

TEACHING SCRIPT SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The fact is, the people you take with you have the power to influence the quality of your trip.

TENSION

No matter who your closest friends are, there's a good chance that they're a lot like you.

Just as we drift toward people like us, we also have a tendency to drift away from people who aren't like us.

TRUTH

When Paul met Jesus, it changed the way he saw himself and the people around him.

As you get to know Jesus, it will change the way you see people.

We're all on a level playing field, because the only name that truly matters is Jesus Christ.

Not only would it change the way people see us, but it would also change the way people see Him.

APPLICATION

Paul is giving us the starting place on how to treat others—with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

In other words, what would it look like for you to treat everyone like they're someone?

LANDING

As you leave here today, think about what you do with people different from you *right now*. Be honest with yourself.



TEACHING SCRIPT

ROAD TRIP | WEEK 3



INTRODUCTION

1 Minute

For the past few weeks we've been talking about road trips. And whether you're heading to the beach with your friends, or stuck in the family minivan on the way to grandma's, we've found that every road trip has one thing in common: These trips rarely go as planned.

So, considering that we may be in the car longer than we originally thought, the most important part of road trips may not be where you're going or even how you get there.

Maybe the key to a good journey is *who* you're going with.

Think about it. A long road trip is amazing when you're with the right people. But when you're with someone you don't want to be around, a road trip is like slow torture. Like someone who insists on driving 20 mph under the speed limit, or someone who only wants to listen to audio books, or someone who won't let you eat in the car. That's not even a real friend, there.

The fact is, the people you take with you have the power to influence the quality of your trip. And if you think about, that same truth can be applied to almost every part of life.

TENSION

3 Minutes

People make life better—but not just *any* people. Your people. Your hang-out-after-school people. Your text-when-I'm-bored people. Your literally-couldn't-get-through-sophomore-year-without-them people.

And I'm willing to bet that all of those people have something in common: **No matter who your closest friends are, there's a good chance that they're a lot like you.** Because most of us choose to surround ourselves with people who are a lot like us.

Sure, they may look different or have a slightly different style of clothes. They wear Vans, while you wear Converse. They order a Slurpie, while you go for Mountain Dew. They get

a latte while you go for the Strawberries and Cream Frapp. But when it comes down to it, how different from you are they *really*? You *have* to have some things in common or you wouldn't be friends, right? That's normal. **We tend to like people who are like us.** Because when we have friends similar to us, we generally experience less drama in those relationships.

Now, we don't wake up every day and say, "I want to find friends who are a lot like me." It's just something we drift toward. And deep down, we know that it's comfortable. When someone thinks like you, dresses kind of like you, or likes the same things you do, it makes you feel better.



In the same way, just as we drift toward people like us, we also have a tendency to drift away from people who aren't like us.

Maybe that sounds harsh. But it's not that we hate people who are different from us. We all just have a tendency to move away from things that make us uncomfortable. And when someone is really different from us, those differences can make things uncomfortable. Think about it for a second...

- Who gets on your nerves in class?
- Who makes you nervous when you have to work together on a school project?
- Who are you least likely to go sit with at their table for lunch?

Maybe for you that's...

- the popular crowd.
- the super-smart people.
- the troublemakers.
- the people who listen to *that* kind of music.
- the people who live in *that* kind apartment complex or *that* kind of house.
- the religious crowd.
- the *not* religious crowd.

Most of us probably don't even realize it, but there are groups of people—people who are different from us—that we've made some assumptions about.

And those assumptions, right or wrong, can affect how we interact with them. I mean, when you don't know much about someone, you have to make assumptions, right?

And deep down, we all probably know that being different doesn't make someone bad or weird or less valuable than us. But somehow we still let ourselves drift into thinking that way. As a result, we get uncomfortable with people who...

- don't dress like us.
- don't talk like us.
- don't think like us.
- don't look like us.
- don't believe like us.

It's completely natural and we *all* do it. But at the same time, something in us knows that this attitude is probably not okay.

But here's the problem: You can't just start liking someone that you don't like. You can't just become comfortable with a group of people you've been uncomfortable around for as long as you can remember. And as tempting as it may sound, you can't just pretend they don't exist.

So where does that leave you?

What do you do with people who are different than you?

TRUTH 5 Minutes

To answer this question, we're going to look back at the very same road Paul was traveling when he first met Jesus—the road to Damascus.

The Bible tells us that there were men with Paul on that first road trip to Damascus. The Bible doesn't tell us their names, and we aren't told much about them, but it's fair to assume that they were a lot like Paul—Jewish men on a mission to destroy followers of Jesus.

In fact, Paul (at the time called Saul) had a history of hanging out with a lot of people like him. A little earlier in the book of Acts, we're told the story of one of Jesus' followers, Stephen, being killed for his faith in Jesus. As he is stoned, the Bible tells us that Saul was not only there, but holding the coats of the guys throwing the stones.

But then he met Jesus and *everything* changed.

After he became a Jesus-follower, Paul's life began to look much different. Not only does his life and beliefs look totally different, he begins traveling with a completely different group of people. Check out these verses from the book of Acts:

When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea,



Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia (Acts 20:1-4 NIV).

Okay, I get it. When I see a list of names like this, my eyes tend to glaze over, too. But the names in these verses were included for a reason. Sopater, Secundus, and Trophimus weren't just guys who could've used some nicknames. They were people who mattered enough to be included in Paul's story, and their names tell us a lot about the change in Paul's life.

When he was traveling to Damascus, Paul's entourage was filled with guys much like him. But years later, when he traveled back to Damascus, his friends couldn't have been more diverse. His new crew resembled the United Nations. Three guys were from Northern Greece, two were from near Galatia, and two were from a city near Ephesus. Each friend brought his own specific background, culture, and view of the world to the group.

Why the big change? Because when Paul met Jesus—when he began to understand who Jesus was and how He loved humanity—it changed the way he saw himself and the people around him.

When it came to Paul's relationships, differences on the surface mattered less than what was the same *below* the surface. And the same is true for you and me. **As you get to know Jesus, it will change the way you see people—all people.**

Later, Paul wrote a letter to a group of believers at Colossae, talking to them about life as a follower of Jesus. Here's what he said:

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Colossians 3:11 NIV).

In Paul's community, just like our communities today, there were categories of people—insiders and outsiders of all

kinds. Their outsiders had different labels—like Gentiles, Jews, Barbarians, and Scythians—but those labels were still just categories.

Notice that Paul doesn't say that those categories don't exist. He's not even saying that we should pretend we don't notice when people are different than us. Instead he's saying that while those categories might exist, they have no place in the presence of Jesus. When it comes to Jesus-followers, the categories don't matter. **We're all on a level playing field, because the only name that truly matters is Jesus Christ.** And when we bear that name and belong to Jesus, there's no label that outweighs it.

Just imagine that for a second. What if our church became a place where we truly embraced that thought? **What if this student ministry was a place where we said, "Here there is no..."**

- Insider?
- Outsider?
- Popular?
- Unpopular?
- Good kids?
- Bad kids?
- Rich kids?
- Poor kids?
- Band kids?
- Athletes?
- Racial divides?
- Cultural differences?

What if this student ministry decided that those things won't determine who we're friends with? Those labels may still exist in everyday life, but what if we, as followers of Jesus, took our cue from Him in the way we *treat* people, especially people different from us?

Not only would it change the way people see us, but it would also change the way people see Him. And maybe it would change the way they see each other.

APPLICATION

3 Minutes

And this sounds like a great concept...until you're face-to-face with a real person who's different than you. A real person who dresses differently, thinks differently, and lives differently than you do. Then what?

Well, thankfully Paul didn't stop there. He continued on this theme by telling his readers exactly what life with no labels looks like. He goes on to say this:



Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved... (Colossians 3:12a NIV).

Now, before Paul says anything about how we treat others, he points out that we are loved—all of us.

Maybe Paul knew that we are most likely to treat others badly when we’re unsure about our own value. But for whatever reason, he reminds us that we belong—that we are God’s people and dearly loved. And this is what he says next...

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12 NIV).

Paul is giving us the starting place on how to treat others—with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Those are the starting points to bridging the difference gap. And when we treat others this way, we’re treating them just as Paul says we all ARE: dearly loved.

In other words...

Treat everyone like they’re someone.

Think about someone you know who’s different than you—someone you may even be tempted to keep your distance from. It could be a person from a certain clique or economic class. It could be someone from a different racial background or different culture than you. What would it look like for YOU to treat THEM with compassion or kindness?

When you think about a group you’re tempted to judge or dislike, what would it mean for you to be more humble? What

would you do differently if you decided to be more gentle toward them in what you do and say about them? When it comes to people who get on your nerves, how would you act differently if you had more patience with them?

In other words, **what would it look like for you to treat everyone like they’re someone?**

This won’t always feel fair. On your life’s road trip, people may hurt you, look down on you, or treat you differently for any number of unfair reasons. And even if you treat them with compassion, it doesn’t mean you’ll get treated that way in return.

But even though we can’t dictate how someone treats us, we can decide how we’ll treat them. That’s the power we have.

And it’s our job to **treat everyone like they’re someone.**

That’s really what all of these ideas boil down to in the end: it’s deciding everybody matters and then acting like it.

Refuse to act like people are invisible.
Refuse to talk about people like they’re less than you.
Refuse to look down on people.

This won’t come naturally. It won’t just happen. You will always have a natural pull to like people who are like you and dislike people who aren’t like you. **But you aren’t required to do what comes naturally.** That’s the beauty of this road trip of following Jesus. You can ask Him to help you to be more like Him, and He will offer His grace to help you!

LANDING
1 Minute

Imagine for a second if we all did this. How would you feel if people different than you began to treat you with more patience, humility, or kindness? What if they spoke more gently to you and about you? How do you think it would change the way you see them? As you leave here today, think about what you do with people different from you right now.

Be honest with yourself. How do you think about them, talk about them, and react to them when they walk in the room? Maybe it’s time to change what comes naturally. Maybe it’s time to **treat everyone like they’re someone, because they are.**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS