

Who's next?



ORIGINAL STUDY GUIDE:

Use this tool to not only accelerate your own spiritual growth but also to make an impact in someone else's life! Take two; pass one on or start a small group within your community of friends by setting a weekly time and place to meet for a Bible study.

WEEK 3:
Finding Your Voice

When an...

unassuming and unremarkable mobile phone salesman from South Wales walked onto the stage in 2007 to sing opera on *Britain's Got Talent*, no one could have anticipated what would happen next. Audience members and judges alike were stunned and even tear-struck as this unlikely star unleashed a booming tenor voice more fit for Broadway than a talent competition! "By day, I sell mobile phones," said Paul Potts, just before making his singing debut in front of Simon Cowell and millions of others on Britain's version of *American Idol*. "My dream is to spend my life doing what I feel that I was born to do." After hearing the beautiful melody that emanates from deep within his soul, few would argue that Potts has indeed found his voice, the unique gifting that makes him uniquely qualified to leave a unique mark on the world around him.

Be Honest.

1. Name one thing that makes you different and unique compared to the people around you.

Say What?

Like Paul Potts, God has uniquely gifted each of us to impact the people in our world. Another Paul, a man from the city of Tarsus (in Turkey) who wrote nearly half of the New Testament, understood this all too well. As he devoted his life to spreading the good news about Jesus, he constantly faced the challenge of presenting the gospel in creative and compelling ways across tremendous cultural and socioeconomic divides. Despite these obstacles, Paul is considered one of the most effective soul-winners in history. So how was this radical evangelist able to stand in the gap and carve out such a unique niche for himself in the culture? How was Paul able to embrace his destiny, find his God-given voice, and win the ears and hearts of so many lost and hurting people?

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23: [NLT]

19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. 20 When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. 21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not

follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. 22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. 23 I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

Say What?

2. How does Paul characterize his relationship with lost people?

3. What was Paul's strategy for spreading the gospel?

4. How did Paul's lifestyle vary based on who he was with at any given time?

So What?

5. How can finding common ground with lost people improve the likelihood that they'll listen to your story and become followers of Jesus? What are the potential pitfalls of such a strategy?

6. Why do you think Paul used slave imagery to describe his relationship with the lost?

7. Do you think it is disingenuous to change your lifestyle or behaviors in order to better relate to the lost people in your life? If not, what word would you use to describe it?

8. In terms of sharing your faith, how do you "try to find common ground with everyone" while maintaining your unique God-given voice?

Now What?

Paul devoted much of the ink in his letters to helping people discover their unique voice in the kingdom of God and empowering them to utilize that voice to spread God's love. Yet Paul understood that Christians don't exist in a vacuum, which is why he modeled a lifestyle of adaptation to his cultural surroundings. Even within his own ministry, winning the lost took precedence over personal convictions, religious freedoms, and pride. For example, at one point Paul arranged for Timothy to be circumcised after his conversion (Acts 16:3)! How far are you willing to go to find your unique voice among the clattering noise of our culture? Are you willing to find common ground with all people so that some of them might be saved? Are you willing to posture yourself in humility as you seek to win the lost people God has placed in your life? The world already has Paul's voice; now it needs yours!

Transparency Time:

Sunday school answers are for sissies!

Be honest! We ALL have struggles.

Honor your small group partners by sharing openly and honestly about yourself and by keeping everything that is shared by others in complete confidence.

Remember: "What's SAID in small group, STAYS in small group!"

Now What?

9. As a follower of Jesus who has been entrusted with the monumental task of sharing His eternity-altering love with others, what is your primary strategy for telling people about Him? How is that strategy working for you?

10. Do you find it difficult to serve the lost people in your life with humility? Explain your answer.

11. What is one practical step you will take this week to exercise your unique voice and serve a lost person in your life?

Further Reading:

- Day 1: 1 Corinthians 9-10
- Day 2: 1 Corinthians 5-6
- Day 3: Acts 10
- Day 4: John 4
- Day 5: Acts 16
- Day 6: 1 Thessalonians 1-3
- Day 7: 1 Thessalonians 4-5

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Notes:

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2. Paul says that he had become a slave to all people in order to bring many of them to Christ (v. 19).
3. When he was with the Jews, Paul adhered to the requirements of Old Testament Law. When he was discipling Gentiles, however, Paul deliberately chose not follow the regulations of the Law (vv. 20-22).
4. Paul's strategy for spreading the gospel was finding common ground with every person he met (v. 22). He knew that in order for the gospel to be embraced, both he and it would need a culturally-relevant presentation. He avoided anything that would hinder the simple, clear presentation of God's love and embraced anything that would enhance it!
5. No one will embrace an irrelevant gospel! Just as we became followers of Jesus because we saw its value in our lives, lost people desperately need to see the value and relevance of Jesus' love if they're going to embrace it. They need to know that the gospel works for everyone, people like you AND people like them, too! If they don't think they have anything in common with you, they likely won't see the need to embrace your Savior! On the other hand, God has called us to live blameless, holy lives (1 Thessalonians 3:13), lives set apart for His glory. Finding common ground with lost people should never lead us to make lifestyle decisions that violate the standards God has set for His followers.
6. Paul viewed the lost as people who needed to be served *with* humility and *without* reservation. Sharing his faith was never about pride, arrogance, or accomplishment; it was always about heaven, hell, and the souls that would spend forever in one of those two places!