

Acts 9



The Worst of Sinners

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 9:1-19

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 9:1-2

The stoning of Stephen was just the beginning for Saul. He continued to grow venomous towards the church and sought to destroy them.

- A** The High Priest was the leader of the Sanhedrin. This meant that he was viewed by Rome as the leader of the Jewish state. Therefore, he had the authority over religious matters. With a letter from the High Priest, Saul had the authority with the Sanhedrin and Temple guard to execute whatever orders the High Priest gave him. In this case it was to arrest Christians.
- B** Notice that the early believers were often referred to as "The Way." The book of Acts refers to Christianity as "The Way" 7 times.

Acts 9:3-9

1 Paul thought he was serving God. Galatians 1:14 states how Paul was an excellent student and was rising to the top of the Judaism ranks. However, Paul was blind spiritually.

Paul begins his journey spiritually blind. In the middle of the journey he becomes physically blind, yet his spiritual eyes begin to open.

2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that all of us are blinded by the devil until the truth of the Gospel opens our eyes.

2 Jesus then tells Saul the real problem, not just that he was persecuting people, but that he was persecuting Christ Himself by harming His people (His body).

What a terrifying thought, that we can zealously serve God yet in reality be fighting against God and fighting for the kingdom of darkness.

1 Timothy 1:6-7 & 2 Timothy 3:1-7 tells us how we can become confident in what we know and who we believe God to be, yet in reality be blind and led astray.

? **Question: How do you know you are not like Paul? Thinking you are serving God but in reality you are serving yourself or a false version of God?**

Acts 9:10-14

God calls on one of His faithful servants to be a part of Saul's conversion. This was a huge ask of Ananias. The early Christians knew about Paul and were afraid of him. Can you imagine if God asked you to go pray for the head of Hamas who is actively ordering the mass murder of Christians?

The question is, do we really believe God can save anyone? Jesus saved demon-possessed men who were out of their mind, and Jesus also saved the rich religious elite and every type of person in between. The truth is that we are all dead in our sins without Christ. (Ephesians 2:1-3)



Question: Do you find yourself thinking some people are more easily saved than others? Why do you think that is? Should we think that way if everyone is a child of wrath before receiving the Gospel?

Acts 9:15-19

Ananias listened to God and walked by faith. God honored his obedience, and as a result Ananias was able to witness one of the most unexpected conversions of all time.



There is a repeating pattern in the book of Acts when salvation is described.

First, we often times see a profession in the person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we see an act of repentance in taking the step to be baptized.

Finally, we see the filling of the Holy Spirit, which in Acts is often times accompanied by a sign. The signs include speaking in tongues, prophesying, and in this case scales falling from the eyes.



There is not always a miraculous sign when someone is saved, however salvation is always miraculous as God turns a child of wrath into a child of God.



Question: Do you lose confidence that when unbelievers hear the Gospel, they will believe and be saved? How about specifically hostile unbelievers? Why do you think that is? Or if not, how do you remain confident in the midst of conflict and rejection?

Read Aloud Acts 9:19-31

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 9:19-25

1

When Saul was converted, people were astounded and perplexed at his behavior. As Saul himself says, he was the worst of sinners and known for his harsh treatment towards the disciples of Jesus. Galatians 1:22-24, 1 Timothy 1:12-17

2

Saul is a great example of what responding to the Gospel should look like. When we are impacted by the love and power of Jesus, we should not be able to help but proclaim that to the world. Below are other examples of men and women who immediately began preaching after their salvation.

- Demon-Possessed Man - Mark 5:1-20
- Woman at the Well - John 4:1-54
- Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-9



Question: If you are passionate and consistent in sharing your faith, why is that? This does not have to mean walking up to strangers, but do you find yourself eager to share with others how God has impacted you? If not, why do you think that is?



3

Notice that Saul did not only preach the Gospel of Christ but also specifically proved that Jesus was the Christ and Messiah. This is important! He did not simply rely on his miraculous experience but instead pointed people to the Scriptures. Saul grounded people in the Bible, showing that the prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled in Christ.

Despite Paul's miraculous conversion and powerful preaching, he still had enemies. In fact so much so that he had to run for his life. Yet this is what Jesus told him would happen. In fact, Jesus warned all of us. Matthew 10:24-25



Question: It is easy to rely on our own emotions and stories when telling our testimony or sharing the Gospel. Although your personal story is powerful, and God will use it for His glory, Saul is a great example of using his testimony to ground people in the truth of Scripture that points to Jesus as the Messiah. How confident are you in your ability to incorporate Scripture in your testimony and help people see that Jesus is the only way to salvation?

Acts 9:26-31

The end of chapter 7 of Acts looked like it was heading for catastrophe. The church was being imprisoned and scattered. Yet now in chapter 9, the disciples are being united to their persecutor with an effort to advance the Gospel. How miraculous!



The entire church kept growing in numbers and depth. At the same time, Paul had to be sent away again because there was ongoing adversity. It is easy to be discouraged after multiple bouts with rejection and persecution, yet Paul did not give up. He had his eyes set on an eternal prize and a heavenly love. Romans 5:1-5, Philippians 3:7-16

Read Aloud Acts 9:32-43

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 9:32-43

1

Acts 9 finishes with Peter performing multiple miracles. It is encouraging to be reminded that we serve a God who is not limited. Isaiah 40:28-31

2

As we look at Peter's ministry, we can see a few ways that Peter provides us a good example as we seek to minister for Jesus.

A

Peter was involved with the ministry. Peter was actively traveling to the various areas of ministry and involved with the body of Christ. If we want to be used by God, a great place to be is around His people and around His work. (32-33)

B

Peter always points the glory back to Christ. He makes it clear that it is the power and grace of Jesus that is performing the work and not himself. (34-35)

C

Peter was not "too busy" to have his day interrupted. When an urgent need came up, Peter was ready and available to follow the Lord's lead. It is easy to get bogged down with daily tasks that we are not even aware of opportunities when they arise. (36-39)

D

Peter prayed and relied on God for strength. He led by example by waiting on God in prayer. (40-41)



Question: From Peter's example, do you see anything missing from your life? Are you involved, Christ-exalting, available, and prayerful?

Weekly Challenge

God is always at work in our lives, yet we are usually pretty busy people. This week try to take time every single day to share with someone one positive thing God has done. This could be as simple as sharing the good news of Christ with someone, sharing about an answered prayer, or just being thankful for undeserved blessings. See what doors God opens up if you dedicate yourself to practicing this daily for just one week.

Memory Verse

Acts 9:31 ESV

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.