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# ORIGINS:

*Trace Your Story to the  
Book of Acts*

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## **FAMILY/GROUP SESSION**

WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE SERMON, THEN LEAD YOUR  
GROUP OR FAMILY IN THE BIBLE PASSAGE THAT  
FOLLOWS

# Home-Group/Family Session 6

## Acts 9:20-31

This week's sermon is in Acts 8:26-9:19  
At [www.JesseCampbellMinistries.com](http://www.JesseCampbellMinistries.com)

### Context:

- Saul of Tarsus was the prized student of the most renowned rabbi of his day who was the student of the most renowned rabbi of *his* day. He was lending his authoritative approval as a respected Pharisee to the public murder of Stephen in Acts 7. Now, this same one who was killing Christians (or "followers of the way" as we were called back then) was now leading people to Christ. Not all of the disciples were immediately comfortable with the idea of working with the guy who was arresting followers of Jesus just a short time prior.

### The Big Idea of This Week's Bible Passage:

- No one is beyond redemption. God may transform even the most murderous anti-Christian into a Christian evangelist and church-planter. God did this with Saul of Tarsus. He's done it countless times since. He can do it today...through absolutely anyone. Now, let's evangelize accordingly. Share your faith *fearlessly* because God is able.

**Acts 9:20 Immediately he [Saul] began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues: "He is the Son of God."**

**21 All who heard him were astounded and said, "Isn't this the man in Jerusalem who was causing havoc for those who called on this name and came here for the purpose of taking them as prisoners to the chief priests?"**

**22 But Saul grew stronger and kept confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.**

**23 After many days had passed, the Jews conspired to kill him, 24 but Saul learned of their plot. So they were watching the gates day and night intending to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a large basket through an opening in the wall.**

**26 When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, since they did not believe he was a disciple. 27 Barnabas, however, took him and brought him to the apostles and explained to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and that the Lord had talked to him, and how in**

**Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 Saul was coming and going with them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 He conversed and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, but they tried to kill him. 30 When the brothers found out, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.**

**31 So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.**

**1. Modern day orthodox Jews disbelieve that Jesus is the Messiah. What do you believe Paul shared that was so confounding and could we share it today?**

**2. Tricky question: just how many days passed between Saul's conversion and Saul's fleeing for his life for the first time (vv.23,24)? What was God doing in Saul during those days?**

**3. Were you skeptical when Kanye West came out as a Christian? Read verse 26 again and describe your own experience with this evidently classic church tendency.**

**4. Everyone needs a friend like Barnabas in verse 27. Who was this person for you and who in the group could use a Barnabas right now? Share with brutal honesty and step up if someone needs you.**

**5. Again, like last week, we see Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8 being fulfilled; this time in verse 31. What was the connection between being "encouraged by the Holy Spirit" and their increasing in number? What does the same connection look like today?**

## The Takeaway for us as the Church:

- It is God's prerogative to radically transform any pagan into a Christian evangelist. So, like Ananias, Barnabas, and the team that helped Saul escape through the wall; we need to show love to the newly saved skeptics and fan their evangelistic lives into flame all the more.

## How to Show Your Kids Jesus in this Passage:

*All Scripture points to Jesus. Here is how you can take what God showed you in this text and disciple your child with it! You don't need a seminary degree and you don't need to be perfect. Just point to Jesus. He is perfect.*

**Saul from Tarsus was cruel to Christians at first. Then, he met the resurrected Jesus in Acts chapter 7. Saul knew a lot about the Old Testament, but he didn't know God personally. When we meet Jesus, everything is different and the same was true for Saul. Saul went from being terrible toward Christians to becoming a Christian himself and sharing the gospel with others. Saul's new Christian friends were not sure at first, but then helped him the way the church should always help new believers. Meeting Jesus changed everything for Saul and it changes everything for us.**

# For the Leader: Acts 9:20-31

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## Ice-Breaker Ideas:

- "Imagine that the head of the Taliban were to be escorted in that door, sit down with us, and tell us he no longer wants to publicly kill Christians because he is one. Who would welcome him and who would bust out of the door?"

## Context:

- Invite Group Members who have not yet watched it on video or listened to its podcast audio to find this session's corresponding sermon at [www.JesseCampbellMinistries.com](http://www.JesseCampbellMinistries.com).
- Saul of Tarsus was the prized student of the most renowned rabbi of his day who was the student of the most renowned rabbi of *his* day. He was lending his authoritative approval as a respected Pharisee to the public murder of Stephen in Acts 7. Now, this same one who was killing Christians (or "followers of the way" as we were called back then) was now leading people to Christ. Not all of the disciples were immediately comfortable with the idea of working with the guy who was arresting followers of Jesus just a short time prior.

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**31** So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

- **Modern day orthodox Jews disbelieve that Jesus is the Messiah. What do you believe Paul shared that was so confounding and could we share it today?**
  - Arguing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah is persuasive not only to orthodox Jewish people, but to Gentiles (non-Jewish people) as well when we show them the messianic prophecies.
  - This is the intent behind the Gospel of Matthew.
  
- **Tricky question: just how many days passed between Saul's conversion and Saul's fleeing for his life for the first time (vv.23,24)? What was God doing in Saul during those days?**
  - First, Paul (Saul) elaborate on precisely why he had to flee when recounting this story in II Corinthians 11:32,33:
    - **II Corinthians 11:32** In Damascus, a ruler under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to arrest me. **33** So I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands.
  - Moreover, Galatians 1:17,18 reveals that this time period was three years in the wilderness of ancient Nabatean Arabia from Damascus south to the Sinai Peninsula. If your time allows, read all of Galatians 1:11-24:
    - **Galatians 1:17** I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus. **18** Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas,<sup>[e]</sup> and I stayed with him fifteen days.

- **Were you skeptical when Kanye West came out as a Christian? Read verse 26 again and describe your own experience with this evidently classic church tendency.**
  - Bring back the ice-breaker from the beginning of the session. Christians become the skeptics when someone who has been hostile to the faith suddenly joins it, but there is a fine line between reasonable trepidation and a lack of faith.
  
- **Everyone needs a friend like Barnabas in verse 27. Who was this person for you and who in the group could use a Barnabas right now? Share with brutal honesty and step up if someone needs you.**
  - Be alright with some silence in your group after asking this. God works through silence. During the follow-up time at the end of the session, make note of who needs to pair up with someone for discipleship; remembering who needs a "Barnabas."
  
- **Again, like last week, we see Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:8 being fulfilled; this time in verse 31. What was the connection between being "encouraged by the Holy Spirit" and their increasing in number? What does the same connection look like today?**
  - That they lived in the fear of the Lord (v.31) indicates that their worldview was built upon the very beginning of knowledge itself (Prov. 1:7). So, this rapidly growing church was built on the right presuppositions; the foundation of intelligibility itself - the fear of the Lord.
  - That they were encouraged by the Holy Spirit is the reason why modern day Assembly of God churches are growing while all other denominations are declining. While some Assembly of God churches teach falsely about the gift of tongues, declaring it necessary for salvation, not all do and God is at work. May your group be just like the growing church of Acts 9:31 - grounded in the fear of the Lord and filled with the Holy Spirit's fiery encouragement as you live life book-by-book together.

### The Takeaway for us as the Church:

- It is God's prerogative to radically transform any pagan into a Christian evangelist. So, like Ananias, Barnabas, and the team that helped Saul escape through the wall; we need to show love to the newly saved skeptics and fan their evangelistic lives into flame all the more.

## Around the Group Follow-Up:

*Keep a journal of prayers prayed and answered, ask for updates on the Non-Christians each Christian in the group is sharing the gospel with, and invite each member of the group whether Christian or Non-Christian to take their next steps in the discipleship process.*

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Thank you so much for leading people in God's Word! [Now, please go to this link to upload your attendance](#) in the row next to your group's name and under the column of this week's Sunday date (even if you do not meet on Sunday).