



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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### LESSON 9 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 9:1-43

#### DAY ONE

1. What “Word” from the Spiritual Reflection or last week's study questions stayed with you?

#### Read Acts 9:1-9

2a. At the end of Chapter 8 Philip proclaimed the good news to all the towns along his journey until he came to Caesarea. Meanwhile, “back in Samaria”, Saul was continuing his efforts to stamp out the followers of Jesus. Record the vivid description of his persecution of the Christians in verse 1.

b. What were Saul's intentions, according to the end of verse 1 and verse 2?

3a. Saul’s life and world were about to change forever. Describe what happened to him on the way to Damascus and what question he was asked (verse 3 and 4)?

b. Read and record the verses from these Old Testament passages that help us understand the relationship between God and light:

Psalm 89:15

Psalm 104:1-2

Isaiah 60:19

4a. What question did Saul ask in return and what was the reply (verses 5 and 6)?

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**THINK:** Consider why Jesus would say that Saul was persecuting Him: In spite of the fact that Jesus had already ascended into heaven, He considers the followers His body on earth.

b. According to verse 7, how did those traveling with Saul react and why?

5a. Describe what things happened next to Saul, according to verse 8.

b. According to verse 9, when Saul reached Damascus, he was without sight for three days, and neither ate nor drank. Describe what you think Saul may have been doing during those three days.

6. CONNECTION: The Christian faith calls us to continual conversion to Christ. While some of us receive a “Damascus road experience,” throwing us to the ground and blinding us with God’s light, others of us experience a less dramatic transformation. For most of us, however, our conversions lead to a deepening of our faith and a transformation to a closer and closer likeness to Jesus that fills our lives with love, peace and joy. Consider your own faith journey, and share some thoughts on any of your own "conversion" experiences with your small group.

Read and record 2 Peter 3:18 and begin your prayer today thanking God for the heart He has given you to love Him more each day.

## **DAY TWO**

### **Read Acts 9:10-19**

7a. Today's lesson describes how the Lord cared for Saul in his blindness. Luke began by introducing a Christian named Ananias who lived in Damascus. In verse 10, we read that the Lord called to Ananias in a vision, and he answered, “Here I am Lord.” What instructions did he receive from God, according to the first part of verse 11?

b. From the few words at the end of verse 11, we see a different Saul. What is he doing and what does this tell you about the change in his life?

8a. According to verse 12, the Lord told Ananias that Saul had a vision of a man named Ananias laying hands on him so that he might regain his sight. Briefly summarize Ananias' reaction to the Lord's command to go to see Saul and fulfill the vision (verses 13 and 14).

b. What was the reason the Lord gave to Ananias to go Saul despite his fears, according to verse 15?

9. In verse 16, the Lord told Ananias that He himself would show Saul how much he would suffer for the sake of His name. What do you think the Lord meant by this?

10a. Ananias obeyed the Lord. He went to the house where Saul was staying, laid his hands on him, and spoke to him. Record the words he used to tell Saul how he happened to be there, according to the first part of verse 17.

b. In this same verse, Ananias also gave Saul two reasons for which he was sent. What are they?

11a. When Ananias finished speaking two things happened “immediately.” Record them here (verse 18).

b. Record from verses 18 and 19 what Saul did after he regained his sight (be sure to read the end of verse 19).

12. CONNECTION: Like Ananias, we are called at times to be God’s instrument when others are suffering. Consider a time when you found that in helping that person, you too received a blessing. Share this experience with your small group.

Record a line from the prayer attributed to St. Francis (see below) that speaks to the assistance you gave the person you described in the Connection. Write a brief prayer thanking God for the special grace He gave you at that time.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love.*

*Where there is injury, pardon.*

*Where there is doubt, faith.*

*Where there is despair, hope.*

*Where there is darkness, light.*

*Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,*

*grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;*

*to be understood, as to understand;*

*to be loved, as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive.*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,*

*and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.*

*Amen.*

### **DAY THREE**

#### **Read Acts 9:20-25**

13a. As yesterday's lesson ended, Saul stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days. According to verse 20, he immediately began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying "He is the Son of God." What does the word "immediately" convey to you about Saul's commitment?

b. The people were astounded when they heard Saul. What was their response, according to verse 21?

14. According to verse 22, Saul became increasingly more powerful in his preaching in Damascus. What did he prove?

15. Luke tells us that the Jews in Damascus who heard Saul were "confounded." Look up the various definitions and describe how one or two could be applied in this instance.

16. In verses 23-24, we read that the Jews in Damascus plotted against Saul and watched the gates of the city day and night so that they could kill him if he attempted to leave. From verse 25, record the unusual way in which Saul's disciples averted their plans.

17. This is not the only time the Bible describes escaping from a walled city. Read and summarize what happened in similar escapes in these passages:

Joshua 2:15 (Referring to Rahab and Joshua's scouts):

1 Samuel 19:12 (Referring to David and his wife, Michal):

18. CONNECTION: Saul actively persecuted Christians. Then, through the intervention of Jesus, he had a change of heart - an illumination. From then on, he used every ounce of his energy and wisdom to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. The fact that Saul had such a dramatic change of attitude and of action made his message all the more convincing. Describe a situation when someone you know had a change of heart and afterward so dramatically changed their actions that it was almost impossible to believe. How did you come to understand that there had been a real change - through actions or words or both? Briefly explain.

Read and Record Matthew 19:26. Begin your prayer resting in the truth of that verse.

#### **DAY FOUR**

##### **Read Acts 9:26-30**

**NOTE:** Scholars indicate that there is a time gap between Saul's escape from Damascus and his trip to Jerusalem (See Galatians 1:17, which indicates that Saul may have gone elsewhere first).

19. In today's passage, Saul traveled to Jerusalem and attempted to join the disciples. What was their reaction and why, according to verse 26?

20a. Who defended Saul and what did he tell them to convince the disciples of Saul's change of heart (verse 27)?

b. Refer to Acts 4:36-37 and refresh your memory by briefly describing from that verse who Barnabus was.

21. From reading verse 28, we learn that the disciples were convinced that Saul's change of heart was genuine, and he "went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord." Not everyone was supportive of him. According to the first part of verse 29, with whom was Saul arguing, and what were they attempting to do?

**NOTE:** The "Hellenists" were the same Greek-speaking Jews about whom we read in Chapter 6 of Acts who, early on, had arguments with the Hebraic Jews and Stephen.

22a. The believers heard of this and took action. What did they do to safeguard Saul, according to verse 30?

b. Why would they send him to Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia (southeastern Turkey) and home to early Jewish settlements?

23. Saul's conversion and his acceptance of his mission to carry the good news of Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed what Father McBride refers to as "having a soul that is open and welcoming to

the Spirit." With all the energy that he once used to persecute the Christians, the converted Saul then devoted himself to proclaiming Christ. He did this in spite of great personal danger. What examples do we have today of Christians who are willing to face danger or oppression to carry the Word of God in Christ to unbelievers or those in need? Share some current examples with your small group.

Read and record Romans 8:38-39 and begin your prayer today thanking God for today's martyrs and saints who carry His Word and protect the faith with courage.

#### **DAY FIVE**

#### **Read Acts 9:31-38**

24a. As today's passage begins, we see that the Church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was peaceful and growing. According to verse 31, record the two ways the Christians were living.

b. Read and record Acts 1:8 in which Jesus foretold the growth of the Church before the Ascension.

25a. Luke's story moves from Saul to Peter, who was visiting different groups of new believers. According to verse 32, what city did he visit and how were the townspeople described?

b. In verse 33, Peter met a man named Aeneas. How is he described?

26a. What two things does Peter tell Aeneas in verse 34?

b. Peter's powerful words had powerful results. What were those results at the end of verse 34. and how did this affect the people of Lydda and Sharon, according to verse 35?

27. In verses 36 and 37, a person named Tabitha is introduced. Describe her and tell what happened to her.

28. Peter was in Joppa, which is near Lydda. Knowing this, in your own words, what did the disciples, do according to verse 38?

29. CONNECTION: In today's passage, we see the people of Joppa upset by the death of their dear friend Tabitha, who was known for her good works. In their grief, the people sent for Peter, their spiritual leader, without delay. While we don't know if they expected the amazing miracle that followed, they looked up to Peter and wanted to be near him at their time of need. Think of a time when you lost someone close to you. Who is the first person you called on in your time of need? What is it about that person that drew you to him or her? Share some of their characteristics with your small group.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:4 and with these words of comfort in mind, write a prayer of gratitude for the person who was there for you in your time of need.

### **DAY SIX**

#### **Read Acts 9:39-43**

30a. As we finished yesterday's study, Peter was in Lydda and had been asked to come to Joppa without delay. According to the first phrase of verse 39, what was Peter's response?

b. Describe what happened when Peter and the two disciples arrived in Joppa.

31a. According to the first sentence of verse 40, what did Peter do?

b. After he prayed, Peter turned to the body and spoke. What did he say and what happened then, according to verse 40?

32. Peter called the people back into the room and showed them that Dorcas was alive. What happened as a result, according to verse 42?

33. The raising of Tabitha bears many similarities to the raising of Jairus' daughter. Read this story in Luke 8:49-55 and list a few similarities between these two miracles.

34. What did Peter do after this incident, according to verse 43?

35a. Read Leviticus 5:2 and briefly note the Old Testament attitude toward those who dealt with carcasses (which would be tanners).

b. In your own words, describe why Peter's choice of companions parallels that of Jesus' and give an example.

36. CONNECTION: This week's lesson contains significant parallels between the life of Jesus and that of Peter. Like Jesus, Peter healed the sick, raised the dead, and associated with society's outcasts. This account substantiates the promise in Acts 1:8 that Jesus would send to the apostles the Holy Spirit who would empower them. The Holy Spirit continues Christ's work in each of us through his Church today. Can you see the Holy Spirit working in your life? Give an example to your small group.

Read and record 1 Corinthians 12:27 and begin your prayer today asking the Spirit of the Living God to fall afresh on His Church today.

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 9 (refer to pages 68–73 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 63-71 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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