

Witnesses to Jesus:

Witness to the Power to Convert & Transform

Acts 9:1-22

Background:

If you were to vote for the person “most likely never to become a Christian” whom would you choose? Why? If you had lived in the first century, you probably would have chosen Saul of Tarsus—and you wouldn’t have been alone. In the passage you will read the powerful story of a very unlikely convert.

1. Read Acts 9: 1–2. What do these verses, as well as the previous study, tell us about Saul and his relationship with the early believers? What symbols of power does Paul have as he travels to Damascus?
2. Now read Acts 9:3–22 to get the rest of the story. Looking at verses 3–9, what happened to Saul on his journey? Try to visualize the scene, and put yourself in the place of the eyewitnesses mentioned in verse 7. What do you see and hear? What are you feeling? How do you think Saul felt?
3. What does the Lord tell Ananias to do? How does Ananias respond? Thinking of the person you chose as the “most unlikely Christian,” what would you do if Jesus came to you in a vision telling you to confront this person?
4. In verse 15, Jesus responds to Ananias’s fear and objections by commanding him to go and by sharing his plans for Saul’s life. What is the Lord’s plan for Saul’s life? [Saul later becomes the famous apostle Paul.]
5. What happens in verses 17–20 as Ananias is obedient to Jesus’ call? How does Saul respond? What might this tell us about facing someone we don’t want to talk to but whom we feel God wants us to talk to?
6. In verses 21–22 what are the words used to describe people’s response to the message (Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ) and the messenger (Saul)? How is Saul’s life transformed?
7. Look back through the whole passage. Who has the power in this passage and who is reacting to that power? While most conversions are not as dramatic as Paul’s, how was yours similar? How did Jesus show himself to you? Was there an “Ananias” in your life?

In Closing:

Think again of your choice for “the most unlikely Christian.” From this passage, what have you learned that speaks to your doubts about their becoming a believer? Take a few minutes as a group to pray for the people you mentioned.

For further Discussion:

Put yourself in Ananias’s place and imagine what he was feeling in this passage. We’re not all public preachers like Paul, but we are called to be witnesses and encouragers like Ananias. To whom can you be an “Ananias” this week? Is there a young Christian you can encourage to grow? Is there someone you need to challenge?