

WARM-UP

- What activities do you and your friends like doing together? Tell us about at least one.
- Who are your closest friends? Tell us about them.
- Share an instance when your friend helped you in a time of trouble.

WORD *²⁸So [Paul] went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. . . . ³¹So 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.*

ACTS 9:28,31

(Read also **ACTS 9:1-31**.)

The Apostle Paul's conversion to Christianity is one of the most miraculous and drastic transformations there is. Through an encounter with Jesus, Paul, first known as Saul, went from being one of the most feared persecutors of the followers of Jesus to one of the most effective evangelists, disciple makers, and church planters. He also wrote most of the New Testament. But even someone like him didn't accomplish these things alone. Paul needed people to join him on his journey of following Christ and preaching the gospel. Today, let us look at key people with whom Paul walked and how these relationships affected the advancing of God's kingdom.

1 | Ananias

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **ACTS 9:17**

Paul's miraculous encounter with Jesus changed his life. But God still sent Ananias to help Paul regain his sight, receive the Holy Spirit, and get baptized. Ananias was simply a disciple of Jesus who obeyed when God called him to help Paul, one of the most feared men of their time. Through Ananias, Paul regained his sight and learned what to do next. Who are the people helping you in your journey of faith? How have they helped you follow God?

2 | Barnabas

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. **ACTS 9:27**

When Paul moved to Jerusalem, the other disciples were afraid of him because they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas defended Paul and told them about the radical change in Paul's life. Eventually, Barnabas and Paul became partners in their journey of preaching the gospel. Barnabas saw Paul in light of who God made him to be instead of who he used to be. Who encourages you to pursue God's calling in your life, despite your past and limitations?

3 | Church Community

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As Paul grew in his faith, the community he walked with grew as well. The disciples welcomed him when he was in Damascus, and the apostles also welcomed him when he moved to Jerusalem. These were the very people Paul had sought to kill, yet they received him into their community and came to his rescue when certain Jews and Gentiles were plotting to kill him. They stood side by side, protecting one another and working together for the mission that Jesus had given them. As a result, the church in the regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace, grew, and multiplied. Why is it encouraging for others when the church is walking in unity? (John 17:22,23)

APPLICATION

- Read and meditate on Jesus' prayer in John 17:20–23 this week. Ultimately, what is the purpose of walking with other people? How can you be more intentional in building relationships with others this week?
- How can you encourage someone to build relationships with others? Identify one or two people to encourage this week.
- Knowing that God also used other people to help you follow Him, who can you walk with and help follow God? Commit to build a relationship with this person and preach the gospel to him or her this week.

