

# Acts 9:20-31

## September 7, 2025



### **CONVERSATION STARTERS**

- What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?
- What Scripture has been shaping you recently?
- Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?
- What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?
- What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?
- What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?
- What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### **INTRODUCTION**

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

#### **Basket Relay**

Setup:

- Divide students into teams.
- Give each team 1 basket and several items to transport (one per person on the team).
- Create a fun obstacle course between the starting line and finish line. Use items like cones, chairs, pool noodles, and so forth. Place an empty basket at the finish line.
- Mark a starting line and a finish line with clear boundaries.

How to Play:

- Teams will take turns going through the obstacle course. Each run will be timed.
- The first player places one item inside the basket and carries it through the obstacle course to the finish line.
- At the finish line, they remove the item from the basket, then run the empty basket back to the start.
- The next player repeats the same steps with the next item.
- Continue until all items have been delivered.

Winning the Game:

The team who delivers all their items to the finish line the fastest wins.

Teaching Moment:

Today we played a fun relay game with baskets where we faced obstacles to deliver our items to the finish line. We're going to continue studying about Saul today. He faced many obstacles in his ministry and once used a basket to safely escape a city as we'll see today.

## ***DISCUSSION***

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 9:20-32.

**What stands out to you in this passage? What do you notice?**

**What was significant about Saul's message in the synagogues?**

**What did it mean for Saul to grow stronger (v. 22)?**

**What was the response to the truth that Saul proclaimed?**

**Why do you think the Jews had this response instead of listening to what Saul, a fellow Jew who previously aligned with them, had to say?**

**How was Barnabas used for God's purposes in this passage?**

**How are we called to live like Barnabas in this way?**

**What was the apparent result of Saul joining in the ministry effort of the early church?**

**What did the Lord say about Saul here?**

## ***GOING DEEPER***

**How has God used you for His purposes despite the parts of your past you might like to ignore or avoid?**

**How does life with Jesus give us freedom to be honest about who we were before meeting Jesus and even the ways we continue to struggle?**

## **APPLICATION**

How does Saul's story give us hope for being used by God in our own lives? How can we "grow stronger" like Saul?

How has God used a "Barnabas" in your life to smooth broken relationships? How has He called you to live this way with others?

How can you share about Jesus with others through the story of Saul?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for choosing to use unlikely and imperfect people like Saul and us for His good. Ask Him to show you how He wants to use you for His glory and ask that He would continue to teach you as you study the book of Acts.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

**September 14, 2025 --- Acts 9:32-43**

## **COMMENTARY**

**Acts 9:20-31**

**9:19–20** Saul stayed in Damascus for some time, likely becoming oriented to basic Christianity even as he began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues. He gave priority to the synagogues throughout his ministry, starting there before being forced to take the message elsewhere.

**9:21–22** Understandably, the initial response to Saul was skeptical amazement, but as he grew stronger he was able to confound unbelieving Jews, proving that Jesus is the Messiah. Apparently, he was able to explain the messianic connections between the OT and Jesus so clearly that the Jews in Damascus could not refute him.

**9:23–25** Saul dutifully preached Jesus as Messiah for long enough to become the uppermost enemy of unbelieving Jews in Damascus. He had come to help their struggle against the growing Christian movement, but now he had become the chief cause of its growth. Thus they conspired to kill him. Unable to leave

via the city gates, Saul escaped in a most undignified but effective manner: he was placed in a large basket and shoved through an opening in the wall.

**9:26** Among believers in Jerusalem, Saul's reputation as a persecutor of the church was unchanged. Either news had not come from Damascus, or else the disciples in Jerusalem took a "wait and see" attitude. Perhaps they even suspected his conversion was just a ruse to infiltrate the fledgling Christian movement and destroy it from within.

**9:27** Barnabas was convinced of the genuineness of Saul's conversion.

**9:28–30** Saul ... conversed and debated with the Hellenistic Jews, some of whom may have been involved with him in Stephen's stoning (7:57–60). A Hellenistic Jew himself, Paul had been born in Tarsus and spoke Greek as his primary language. Seeing one of their own, a former persecutor of the church no less, argue on behalf of Christianity was more than they could bear. They tried to kill Saul, with the result that he was whisked away to his hometown.

**9:31** This verse marks a significant point in the development of the early church. The church, having been forced by persecution to scatter outward from Jerusalem, was at peace in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This set the church up for a second stage of growth, which would see the gospel boldly taken outside Israel.