

# How to Change Your Life

## (The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus)



*"<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said, 'Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel.'" Acts 9:15 NLT*

- In what ways do you wish you could change your life?

Many people come to a point where they want to go a different direction in life. They want a more productive, positive, wholesome direction for their life. It may be a change to strengthen their marriage or improve their relationship with their children, parents, or friends. It may be a change to better manage their finances, or to be healthier and more physically fit. It may be changes with their job, to be more productive and less stressful. It may be a desire to break addictions and harmful habits. **The most crucial change is our relationship with God.**

Saul of Tarsus was on a mission - a murderous mission. *"Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers."* (9:1 NLT). Saul viewed Christianity as a cult that came out of Judaism. He wanted to purge Judaism and the world of the Christians. He believed he was doing God a service by persecuting Christians. However, on his way to Damascus, he encountered Jesus Christ, and the direction of his life was changed. His story shows us what is necessary to experience true life change.

### The Central Lesson

**Jesus Christ is the source of true life change.**

#### 1. We must recognize the true **IDENTITY** of Jesus Christ (9:5).

*"<sup>5</sup> 'Who are you, lord?' Saul asked. And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!'"*

At first, Saul did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He saw him as a false prophet. But when the bright light knocked him off his horse, and a voice spoke from heaven, he knew this was a God encounter. Paul realized that he had everything wrong when Jesus identified himself.

#### 2. We need a life-changing **ENCOUNTER** with Jesus Christ (Salvation/the New Birth) (9:3-5).

*"<sup>3</sup> As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?' <sup>5</sup> 'Who are you, lord?' Saul asked. And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!'"*

Paul needed an encounter with Jesus at a specific point in time. He needed a moment when he saw the true identity of Jesus and his need to follow him rather than fight him. When was there a specific time when you encountered Christ?

#### 3. We must be willing to **OBEY** God (9:6).

*"<sup>6</sup> Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."* Once Saul came to grips with the true identity of Jesus, he was willing to obey Christ immediately with no hesitation. *How willing are you to obey Jesus?*

#### 4. We must recognize our **BLIND** spots (9:8-9).

*"<sup>8</sup> Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. <sup>9</sup> He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink."*

Why did Saul experience blindness? Perhaps it was God's way of showing Saul that he had been blind about many things. He had been blind about Jesus, God's plan of salvation, and many other things. We all have areas where we are blind. Only the light of the scriptures can clear up our blind spots. *In what areas have you been blind in the past? Are you studying the Bible regularly?*

#### 5. We need to connect, communicate, and commune with God through a consistent **DEVOTIONAL** time (9:11-12).

*"<sup>11</sup> The Lord said, 'Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. <sup>12</sup> I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again.'"*

#### 6. We must embrace God's **PURPOSE** for our life (9:15-16).

*"<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said, 'Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.'"*

#### 7. We need to daily surrender to the **INFLUENCE** (filling) of the Holy Spirit (9:17).

*"<sup>17</sup> So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.'"*

#### 8. We need a new **IDENTITY** - a follower of Christ (9:18-20).

*"<sup>18</sup> Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized." <sup>20</sup> And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is indeed the Son of God!'"*

Saul identified himself with Christ through baptism. Also, through his witness.

#### 9. We must **ASSOCIATE** with others who share our passion and purpose (positive peer-pressure) (9:26-27).

*"<sup>26</sup> When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the believers, but they were all afraid of him. They did not believe he had truly become a believer! <sup>27</sup> Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus."*

Fellowship with other Christians was helpful in Saul's growth in his new life.

#### 10. We need a **MENTOR** or **COACH** to guide us in the new direction (9:28).

*"<sup>28</sup> So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord."*

God placed several people in Saul's life to help him grow spiritually and to discover God's new direction for his life—Ananias (9:10), Barnabas (9:27), and the apostles (9:28). We, too, need people to help us grow spiritually.

### CONCLUSION: Jesus Christ is the source of true life change.

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ.
- ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.