

Case Studies

This case study can be carried out as a dramatic reading followed by discussion of the questions provided at the end. A narrator, Jesus, Saul, Ananias, and a worshiper are needed to do this short reading.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus – Acts 9 A Case Study in Conversion

Narrator Saul of Tarsus continued to breathe out murderous threats against the disciples of Jesus. He went to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. With these he would arrest any Jews in Damascus who believed that Jesus was the Christ. He would bring them back, in chains, to Jerusalem.

As Saul neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him:

Jesus Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul Who are you, Lord?

Jesus I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city. You will be told what you must do.

Narrator The men traveling with Saul stood speechless. They heard the voice from heaven but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes. He was blind! He groped for help. His traveling companions had to lead him by the hand into Damascus. For three days everything was dark. He did not eat; he did not drink. He simply stayed in an unfamiliar house and prayed.

(Short pause)

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision:

Jesus Ananias.

Ananias Yes, Lord.

Jesus Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for Saul of Tarsus. Here he is, praying. In a vision he has already seen you come and place your hands on him to restore his sight.

Ananias Lord, I have heard about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest everyone who calls on your name.

Jesus Go! I have chosen him to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

Narrator So Ananias went to the house of Judas and went in. Placing his hands on Saul, he said:

Ananias Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you as you were coming to Damascus, has sent me to you. Receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Narrator Immediately, coverings fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was immediately baptized. He ate and gained strength. Saul was a new man.

And everything changed. At once he began to preach in the synagogues of Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked:

Worshiper Isn't this the man that killed people in Jerusalem for calling on this name? Isn't he here to arrest others and take them to the chief priests?

Narrator But Saul grew more and more powerful and amazed the Jews living in Damascus by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Questions

1 – When a person is converted to Christ, something produces conviction in his or her heart:

What produced conviction in Saul's heart?

What did Saul become fully convinced of on the Damascus road?

2 – Conviction produces conduct. Once Saul was convinced of the truth, what did he do that was consistent with his new found belief? Find answers in the story.

3 – A crisis of conscience is a powerful part of the conversion process:

What crisis of conscience do you think Saul of Tarsus experienced? Does he give hints of it later in his writings? For example, see 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:12-15.

What crisis of conscience do you think the Jews of Jerusalem experienced on the day of Pentecost? Find an answer in Acts 2.

Does a crisis of conscience always have to be dramatic? Please explain.

What crises of conscience can we experience today that prompt us to turn our backs on a former way of life and commit ourselves to a new life in Christ?