

Acts 26:12-18 (HCSB)

12. "I was traveling to Damascus under these circumstances with authority and a commission from the chief priests. **13.** King Agrippa, while on the road at midday, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, shining around me and those traveling with me. **14.** We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

15. "Then I said, 'Who are You, Lord?'

"And the Lord replied: 'I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. **16.** But get up and stand on your feet. For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen and of what I will reveal to you. **17.** I will rescue you from the people and from the Gentiles. I now send you to them **18. to open their eyes so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that by faith in Me they may receive forgiveness of sins and a share among those who are sanctified.'**"

Acts 26:19-23 (HCSB)

19. "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

20. Instead, I preached to those in Damascus first, and to those in Jerusalem and in all the region of Judea, and to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of repentance. **21.** For this reason, the Jews seized me in the temple complex and were trying to kill me. **22.** To this very day, I have obtained help that comes from God, and I stand and testify to both small and great, saying nothing else than what the prophets and Moses said would take place—**23.** that the Messiah must suffer, and that as the first to rise from the dead, He would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles."

Historical Background of Paul's Conversion Paul, originally known as Saul of Tarsus, was a devout Pharisee and a zealous persecutor of Christians. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3), a major Greco-Roman city known for its intellectual and cultural influence. Saul studied under Gamaliel, a respected teacher of Jewish law (Acts 5:34,

22:3). As a staunch defender of Jewish traditions, Saul actively pursued and arrested followers of Jesus, believing them to be a threat to Judaism (Acts 8:1-3, 9:1-2).

His conversion took place around A.D. 33-36 while he was traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians. His encounter with Jesus Christ on the road resulted in a dramatic transformation, changing him from a persecutor to a proclaimer of the gospel (Acts 9:1-19). This momentous event led to his commissioning as an apostle to the Gentiles, a mission that shaped the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman world.

Cross-Reference Scriptures Supporting Acts 26:18

1. **Colossians 1:13 (HCSB)** – "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves." ***(Conversion is being transferred from Satan's kingdom into Christ's kingdom.)***
2. **2 Corinthians 4:6 (HCSB)** – "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ." ***(God opens our spiritual eyes removing blindness and bringing us into His light.)***
3. **Ephesians 5:8 (HCSB)** – "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." ***(Conversion changes identity and calls us to live differently.)***
4. **1 Peter 2:9 (HCSB)** – "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." ***(God calls people out of spiritual darkness into His light and purpose.)***

Biblical Characters Who Experienced Conversion & Their

Challenges 1. Saul (Paul) – From Persecutor to Preacher • Conversion Story: Acts 9:1-19, Acts 26:12-18 • **Challenges After Conversion:**

- o **Rejection by His Former Circle** (Acts 9:21-22) – Paul was feared and distrusted by both Jews and Christians.

o **Persecution** (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) – Suffered beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, and opposition for preaching the gospel.

o **Spiritual Warfare** (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) – A "thorn in the flesh" (possibly a demonic attack or physical ailment) to keep him humble. 2. The Philippian Jailer – From Despair to Faith • Conversion Story: Acts 16:25-34 • Challenges After Conversion:

o **Societal and Occupational Risks** – As a Roman jailer, converting to Christianity might have put his job and social standing in jeopardy. o Immediate Radical Change – His first act after conversion was washing the wounds of Paul and Silas—showing how faith required immediate transformation. 3. Zacchaeus – From Greedy Tax Collector to Generous Disciple • Conversion Story: Luke 19:1-10 • Challenges After Conversion:

o **Restitution & Making Things Right** (Luke 19:8) – He pledged to give back four times what he stole.

o **Loss of Financial Security** – His livelihood was built on dishonest gain, and conversion meant sacrificing wealth. 4. The Samaritan Woman – From Outcast to Evangelist • Conversion Story: John 4:1-30 • **Challenges After Conversion:** o Facing Past Sins (John 4:18-19) – Jesus confronted her about her broken relationships.

o **Rejection & Skepticism** (John 4:29) – She had to convince others that her transformation was real. 5. The Ethiopian Eunuch – From Religious Seeker to True Worshiper • Conversion Story: Acts 8:26-40 • Challenges After Conversion:

o **Understanding New Faith** (Acts 8:30-34) – He needed help interpreting the Scriptures.

o **Lack of Christian Community** – He returned to Ethiopia with limited access to discipleship. _____

Challenges Converts Face After Conversion 1. Spiritual Opposition & Persecution • John 15:18-20 – “If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me before it hated you.” • Example: Paul faced immediate death threats and imprisonment after conversion. • Application: New believers often experience rejection from family, workplace hostility, or

even physical harm in some cultures. 2. Overcoming Old Habits & Temptations • Romans 6:6-7 – “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin.” • Example: Zacchaeus had to break free from greed and restore what he stole. • Application: Many struggle with lingering sinful patterns and must rely on God’s power for victory. 3. Doubt & Uncertainty • James 1:6-8 – “But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind.” • Example: The Ethiopian eunuch needed guidance to understand his new faith. • Application: Converts often wrestle with doubts and questions about God, the Bible, and their salvation. 4. Learning to Walk in a New Identity • 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.” • Example: The Samaritan woman had to embrace her new identity and testify despite her past. • Application: Many struggle with shame, guilt, and fully accepting God’s forgiveness. 5. Discipleship & Spiritual Growth • Hebrews 5:12-14 – “Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation again.” • Example: Paul spent years in learning before fully stepping into ministry (Galatians 1:15-18). • Application: Without strong discipleship, new believers may become stagnant or misguided in their faith.

_____ Integration into the 4-Week Study

Week 1: The Need for Conversion – Recognizing Spiritual Blindness • Biblical Character: Paul’s blindness on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:8-9). • Challenge for Converts: Spiritual blindness must be removed before transformation can occur. Week 2: The Process of Conversion – Turning from Darkness to Light • Biblical Character: The Samaritan woman (John 4:28-30). • Challenge for Converts: Overcoming doubt and rejection as they embrace their new faith. Week 3: The Evidence of Conversion – Walking in the Light • Biblical Character: Zacchaeus making restitution (Luke 19:8). • Challenge for Converts: Faith without works is dead; transformation should be visible. Week 4: The Mission of the Converted – Sharing the Light • Biblical Character: The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:33-34). • Challenge for Converts: Every believer is called to share their testimony and bring others to Christ.

Week 1: The Need for Conversion - Recognizing Spiritual Blindness

1. **Ephesians 2:1-3 (HCSB)** - "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also."

- ***Before we can embrace the light of Christ, we must first recognize the depth of our spiritual darkness.***

2. **2 Corinthians 4:4 (HCSB)** - "In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

- ***Spiritual blindness is not just ignorance; it is a condition that requires divine intervention.***

3. **John 9:25 (HCSB)** - "He answered, 'Whether or not He's a sinner, I don't know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!'"

- ***As Jesus opened the blind man's eyes, He also opens our hearts to see the truth of salvation.***

Week 2: The Process of Conversion - Turning from Darkness to Light

1. **Acts 9:3-6 (HCSB)** - "As he traveled and was nearing Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. Falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 'Who are You, Lord?' Saul said. 'I am Jesus, the one you are

persecuting,' He replied. 'But get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.'"

- ***Saul's encounter with Jesus reminds us that conversion is not a human effort but a divine calling.***

2. **Acts 3:19 (HCSB)** - "Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out."

- ***A true turning to God involves both repentance from sin and faith in Christ's work on the cross.***

3. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (HCSB)** - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!"

- ***When God converts a heart, He doesn't just improve it—He renews it brand new.***
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Week 3: The Evidence of Conversion - Walking in the Light

1. **Romans 12:2 (HCSB)** - "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."

- ***Conversion is not just a moment but a lifelong transformation that changes how we think and live.***

2. **1 John 2:3-6 (HCSB)** - "This is how we know that we know Him: if we keep His commands. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and yet doesn't keep His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly in him the love of God is made complete. This is how we know we are in Him: The one who says he remains in Him should walk just as He walked."

- ***Genuine conversion produces a desire to obey God, not out of duty but out of love.***

3. **Galatians 5:22-23 (HCSB)** - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things."

oA changed heart will always bear the visible fruit of a transformed life.

This **4-week outline** should help believers understand, experience, and share the transformative power of **conversion**.