

# *Life!* *Training*

Name:

Date:

# Total Conversion

*Turning to Jesus*  
*100%*

Welcome to this journey through the experiences and teachings of the apostolic church as recorded in the book of Acts and the Letters written by the apostles. As a member of His body, you will discover His treasures for those who take His Name and receive His Spirit.

Come to the Scriptures with a prayer-filled heart and open mind as you uncover truths for your life. Record these in the blanks provide to help keep yourself accountable in your daily growth. Talk to the Lord when you find yourself coming short in an area. Share with others the riches you find in His living Word.

Day 1: embellished Bible story.

Day 2-6: interactive journal devotions.

Day 7: contemporary stories of faith.

## Same Energy, New Focus

God- \_\_\_\_\_ make great \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>1</sup>

A person must come \_\_\_\_-to-\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>2</sup>

Conversion transforms one's \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>3</sup>

God \_\_\_\_\_ what you \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ do for Him.<sup>4</sup>

An \_\_\_\_\_ past does not prevent a \_\_\_\_\_ future.<sup>5</sup>

God \_\_\_\_\_ His people for His \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>6</sup>

Open-eyed converts enter \_\_\_\_\_ and Spirit \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>7</sup>

Growing believers \_\_\_\_\_ with their world.<sup>8</sup>

Faith in Jesus helps one \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>9</sup>

The brotherhood \_\_\_\_\_ one \_\_\_\_\_.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 9:1-3; 7:58; 8:3; 22:3-4; 26:9-11; I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13

<sup>2</sup> 9:4-6; Luke 10:22; 19:2-4; John 12:21, 41; II Cor. 4:6; Hebrews 1:3; 2:9

<sup>3</sup> 9:7-9; 22:11; 26:13-14; II Kings 6:17-20; II Chronicles 33:12-13; Jonah 3:6-8

<sup>4</sup> 9:10-12, 15; 22:12; 8:26; 20:24; Exodus 3:4; 4:10-13; I Samuel 8:10; Isaiah 6:8

<sup>5</sup> 9:13-14; I Kings 19:3-4; Jeremiah 20:7-9; Jonah 1:2-3; I Timothy 1:13-15

<sup>6</sup> 9:15-16; Jeremiah 1:5, 7; John 15:16; Galatians 1:15-16; II Timothy 2:20-21

<sup>7</sup> 9:17-19; 22:12-16; 2:38; John 3:1-8; Galatians 3:27; 5:16, 22-23; Titus 3:5

<sup>8</sup> 9:20-22; John 20:28, 31; II Cor. 12:9-10; Philippians 4:13; I John 4:14-15

<sup>9</sup> 9:23-26; 22:18-23; I Cor. 4:9; II Cor. 6:4-5; Colossians 1:24; II Tim. 4:6

<sup>10</sup> 9:27-31; Romans 12:4-5; I Cor. 6:15; 8:12; 10:16; 11:29; 12:12-27; Col. 2:19

## Human Influence

*See Acts 9:10-20; 22:12-16*

I had always looked forward to the opportunity of meeting Saul. Then I became a believer in Jesus. Everyone said he was the next Gamaliel—and he was proving himself more zealous than his own mentor by persecuting believers. The latest news we had received was that he was coming to Damascus to imprison and demoralize the disciples.

Since most of the Jews in town respected my lengthy devotion to the Torah, the followers of Jesus asked me, “Ananias, could you do something to stop him?”

Of course, I didn’t want to stick my neck out unnecessarily. Stephen had just died, the apostles had been beaten, and I only wanted to do God’s will, not something dumb. I did not want Saul to find the other believers.

I went to the Lord and asked Him to give me direction. Suddenly, it was as if I could hear Him call me.

“Here I am, Lord,” I said.

“Get up,” He told me, “and go to Judas’ house on Straight Street and ask for Saul of Tarsus. He has been praying and saw a vision of a man named Ananias entering the house, laying hands on him so he could see again.”

Now it was not just my friends or even my conscience pushing me—this was Jesus telling me to go face this man. I said, “Lord, I have heard a lot of bad about this guy. He has done so much evil to your holy people at Jerusalem. Now, he’s come here with a warrant from the chief priests to arrest anyone who calls on your Name!”

He said, “Go ahead. He is my chosen vessel to carry my name to the heathen and their rulers and the descendents of Israel. I will reveal to him the many things he will suffer for the cause of My Name.”

So, I went on down and walked into Judas’ house. There was Saul, as blind as a bat. I put both my hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus who appeared to you on the road—sent me here so you can receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

As God filled him with the Spirit, flakey, scab-like scales fell from his eyes. As he looked up at me, I said, “The

God of our ancestors has selected you to know His desires and to see the Holy One and hear the voice of His mouth. You will confirm to everyone what you have seen and heard.”

I looked at him sitting there with a glow on his face. I said, “So what are you waiting for? Get up and get baptized. Get your sins washed away as you call on the Name of the Lord!”

We baptized him right away and afterward he ate something for the first time in three days. After getting some strength back, he joined with the disciples in Damascus and right away he was preaching to the Jews that Christ is the Son of God.

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*See Acts 9:26-31*

I prefer to be called Joses, but all my believer friends nick-named me “the encourager”—*Barnabas*, in our language. I don’t know why they gave me a special name. I have never tried to make a name for myself, just looking out for others the way I would want them to look out for me.

Now, most of my hometown fellow believers had left Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen’s death. So, when another foreign-born Jewish believer in Jesus showed up, I was naturally supportive of him.

No one else was. And you can’t blame them—this was the guy who stood and enjoyed the death of Stephen—another foreign-born Jewish believer in Jesus. But when Saul showed up, I could see the change in him. He was no longer a hard-nosed legalist; he was a brother in Christ.

Saul tried joining with us in worship and fellowship, but I could see him getting the cold shoulder from many in our group because they did not trust him. Not thinking, I jumped up and put my arm around him. I said, “Saul, I’m so glad you have come. Let me introduce you to the apostles.”

I could see the gratitude in his eyes. I took him in before Peter and James and told them how God had dealt with this man and stopped him short of his murderous plan. I told what I had heard about his powerful preaching and convincing many in Damascus that Jesus is Lord. Finally, they let him join us and even preach a little.

## **When God Jabs You**

Saul of Tarsus must have been in and around Jerusalem during Jesus' earthly ministry. Did Saul ever hear Him teach? Did they ever meet? While we do not know the answers to these questions, we can be sure that Saul heard of Jesus before His death and resurrection. We can be sure he had seen and heard strong witnesses to His identity because he supported Stephen's death when he stood up for Jesus.

We do not know how many ways the Lord tried to get Saul's attention. We do know how He finally got it, though. In Acts 9:3-4, how did Jesus get Saul's attention?

Many unbelievers have encounters with the Lord or at least hear someone bear witness to Him. They continue down their path of life, however, ignoring His advances. Sometimes, the Lord uses unusual circumstances to get our attention. How did God get your attention? Did your soft heart turn to Him when He whispered to you? Or did He have to knock you off your horse to get your attention?

In Acts 9:5 (and 26:14), what did Jesus say was hard for Saul?

The Lord refers to a pointed stick an ox-driver would use to poke or prick an ox to keep it moving. If the animal kicked back against these nudges, the driver will jab it all the harder to get it moving in the right direction. God did not start working on Saul with dramatic action at first. The Lord had prodded Saul through Stephen's testimony and other events. How has the Lord poked at you to get your attention?

Driven mad by the pricks to his conscience after Stephen's death, Saul raged like a wild bull, rushing to stomp out every last disciple of Jesus. Before your conversion, how did the Lord jab you to steer you right?

Did you get angry at Christians? Before conversion, did you have digestive issues, stress, hypertension, or panic attacks? Did you lash out in meanness to others?

Is it possible God is still goading you?

Stephen was a pain in Saul's side when he resisted the message. Later, Paul tells of having a thorn in His flesh for life. If God jabs us to get us on the right road, He may also prod us to stay on that road. What has God sent your way to help keep you on the "straight and narrow"?

When God slammed on the stadium lights and got your attention, how long did it take you to head in the right direction?

How long did it take Saul, in Acts 9:8-9? How was your experience similar to and different than his?

## **“Why are You Persecuting Me?”**

Saul of Tarsus began fighting against God, as his teacher Rabbi Gamaliel had warned against (5:39). Nothing was going to stop Saul’s rip-snorting agenda. He hurried to Damascus, snorting his flared nostrils at his enemies like God (Psalm 18:8, 15). Who was Saul out to get, in Acts 9:1?

Instead of saying He was coming to the aid of the church, in Acts 9:4, Jesus said Saul was persecuting whom?

Jesus was not acting as bodyguard or lawyer for the believers; He approached Saul as being personally harmed by him. In what way was Saul bullying Jesus?

Name a time you belittled a brother or sister in the Lord or treated them wrong.

How do you respond to Jesus’ question, “Why are you persecuting me?”

In Matthew 25:34-46, how do you affect the Lord with the way you treat other church members?



When you stub your little toe, you feel it. Just a little member's pain can bring the whole body to a halt. Jesus feels what goes on among believers. If you gossip or deceive, your hateful behavior wounds the Lord again. Take a moment and write out a prayer of repentance to the Lord for any hurts you may have brought to His body.

Who else do you need to talk to today, to get things right with them and in your heart?

Sometimes people will reject your apology. They may even reject you and never wish to speak to you no matter what you do to change the situation. How does Jesus take it when people accept or despise you, in Luke 10:16?

Did you realize that Jesus is incomplete without you? How does Ephesians 1:23 make this clear?

In Ephesians 4:15, how should you grow?

In Ephesians 4:16, how else do we grow as a body?

## **Brotherly Love**

Ananias was protective of the church body. How does Acts 22:12 describe this man?

The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision. How did Ananias respond, in Acts 9:10?

The Lord then gives him instructions on where to go and what to do with Saul. How does 9:12 let us know the Lord knew this man's willing heart? What did He do before even speaking to Ananias?

In 9:13-14, why was Ananias wary of Saul? Who was he concerned for?

When Ananias obeyed and found Saul on Straight Street, what did he call him, in 9:17?

How did this help welcome Saul into the group? How can you be friendlier with newcomers?

What would have become of Saul if Ananias allowed prejudice to keep him from his mission? Who might be waiting for you to reach out with love and truth?

Most Christians feel left out of all the drama Saul and Ananias experience: visions, audible voices, and miracles. Some might wonder what they can do for the Lord since they rarely experience anything so noteworthy. However, we must realize that God works through our natural lives just as much as He does through His supernatural power.

Some people wait around their whole lives for something dramatic to happen instead of being part of what God is doing through their commonness. Barnabas illustrates this point. When Saul came to Jerusalem, none of the believers trusted him there. Although the apostles were so close to the Lord, they did not receive any visions about him. Neither did Barnabas.

In Acts 9:26, how did the Jerusalem disciples react to Saul's arrival?

However, while everyone held back, depending on their "normal" reactions to an enemy (exclusion), Barnabas did something abnormal. What was it, in Acts 9:27?

Did an angel tell Barnabas to do this?

Did he fast a week and pray all night before he got inspired to do this?

Compare the impact Barnabas and Ananias had on Saul's membership and ministry in the church. Was supernatural ministry (Ananias) more meaningful than natural warmth and kindness (Barnabas)? Why?

## **How to Focus Your Blindness**

Being chosen from among all nations on earth, Jews considered themselves “guides of the blind.” What did Jesus call the Pharisees, in Matthew 15:14?

How was the Pharisee Saul also blind?

What did the Lord do to this blind man, in Acts 9:3?

In 9:8-9, after meeting Jesus, how were his eyes?

In His unparalleled sense of humor, God made the spiritually blind man go physically blind so he could begin to truly see. How does John 9:39-41 explain this?

Ananias laid hands on him and said, “Brother Saul, receive your sight.” What happened in Acts 9:18?

How is this symbolic of what happens to a person’s spiritual eyes? How has this happened to you?

Most humans are blinded by pride. We think we are right and consult only with our own feelings or limited experiences. From this shallow pool of insight we set sail to remap the globe. It takes the perspective of One who has been to the very depths and ascended to the highest heights to help us get proper focus.

Blind people think they impress God. Proud people think they should be a global role model. Humble people realize God as our true mentor. We can brag about ourselves to Jesus, or kneel humbly before Him. How does Saul become both characters in Jesus' story in Luke 18:9-14?

How have you filled both roles?

When you come to the Lord humbly, how do you share in Saul's experience? Answer from II Corinthians 4:6.

Saul did not see Jesus for his amusement. In Acts 26:18, what new vision did Jesus give this once-blind man?

Three days of intense focus brought Saul to know Jesus, take His name in baptism and receive His Spirit. It took three years of getting to know Him in the desert before he launched into ministry (Galatians 1:17-18). The Lord has opened your eyes so you can bring the light to others. What are you doing to get alone with the Lord and prepare?

## **Suffering for Christ**

Somehow, most believers think they chose Jesus. We often forget, however, that He first loved us. He picked you out. You are His special creation. What did the Lord tell Ananias about Saul in Acts 9:15?

You also are a chosen vessel. What do you think God has chosen you to do for Him in this life?

How does II Timothy 2:20-21 apply to your life?

In Acts 9:16, what does Jesus plan to show Saul?

Does this sound right? God has specially chosen a man to suffer for Him? Read II Corinthians 11:23-27 and write down all the things this man later would suffer for Christ.

Now, do you feel you have had a tough life?

God blesses us with all kinds of suffering. Those who serve the Lord will face difficulties of some sort: social rejection, financial deprivation, emotional heartbreak, health issues, or many other possibilities. Few in civilized countries experience the same things as this special servant of God. In Acts 9:23, how did Saul's enemies feel toward him?

According to Acts 22:19-20, what did Saul know his brothers in Jerusalem knew about him?

This man who once had murder on his breath toward the Jesus-people, now had men like himself hunting to bring him down. Perhaps this is why he did not whimper as many of us would. He knew what it was to feel the way they felt and understood their misplaced zeal.

Rather than let this opposition quiet him, what does Acts 9:22 say about his spiritual ability?

How do you handle God-allowed suffering in your life? Do you whine for relief or do you let it make you stronger? How do you handle rejection for the sake of the Name of Jesus? Does it grow you?

How can you make II Timothy 4:6 your mindset, too?

## A Modern Saul

By a strange coincidence, the usually well-informed cousin Saul was unaware that Eucaris was back and having an evangelistic session the same night.

As evening came, scores of people slowly made their way from their scattered homes to the meeting. Eucaris felt a little overwhelmed when she saw the crowd but said a quick prayer and began singing in her sweet, Latin voice, accompanying herself on the guitar. Later she would explain just how she had met Hermano Drost, been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and spoken in tongues, thus finding tremendous joy in serving the Lord. In the meantime, feeling a powerful anointing, she continued singing and teaching songs to the crowd. Cousin Saul, she noted, was absent.

All afternoon Saul had felt edgy. . . it wasn't like him. Something was wrong; he could feel it in his bones, but he couldn't put his finger on it....

No doubt he would soon discover why he felt the way he did, he thought, as he checked his pistols and placed them back in position under the bar.... While pondering these things, he heard the sound of hooves outside; after seeing that the rider was unarmed, he ran outside. "Hey, what's going on; where is everybody tonight?" he shouted.

The rider stopped. "Oh, haven't you heard? Everybody's at the gospel meeting that girl is holding!"

"What gospel meeting? What girl?" Saul demanded, surprised.

"Young Eucaris—your cousin. She was in Cali - found religion. . . something about being able to speak another language. Anyway everybody is there to listen to her. I'm just on my way." And off he rode into the night.

So that was it! Saul was wild. Eucaris, his smart bit of a cousin, was playing the big shot because she'd been to Cali! Who did she think she was anyway? He'd soon fix her. . . . Saul ran back into the bar, put on double holsters, quickly made ready his horse, and tore down the mountain track furiously, determined to settle this nonsense. Religion—he'd soon show them!



Approaching the house, he saw many animals tied outside in the moonlight.... Glancing through the window, he took in the situation. Sure enough his cousin was there—she seemed to be praying or something—with people who were kneeling down.... Pulling himself up to his full height and throwing his chest out, he barged through the door with his shoulder in a dramatic entrance, hands on pistols.

But that was as far as he got.

Eucaris had never felt such a spirit of evangelism. She recited all she had seen happen in Cali and preached a down-to-earth message on the love of God and the need to repent. As she told simple stories, the folks came under tremendous conviction. Some were weeping; many were getting right with God. Eucaris wept with them, praying earnestly for God to baptize them with His Spirit.

At that moment Saul came in with a bang. Startled, Eucaris took in the situation and prayed that God would stop Saul from ruining the meeting.

Saul couldn't move. He stood transfixed at the door, dazed and confused. It was like he was in a dream; nothing would move, not an arm, not a finger, not an eyelid.... Suddenly, in the atmosphere, he felt tremendously unclean. His cousin came towards him in seeming slow motion; she looked radiantly beautiful, and she looked. . . clean. The dark eyes of Eucaris looked at him from unplumbed depths, with a tenderness he had never seen the like of. It was as though some other force was in those eyes. Saul wilted as he looked into them. She put her hands on his head, and he felt fire go through him as she said, "You need Jesus."

At that moment, released from the force that held him, he dropped to his knees. He could do no more. All he wanted to do was cry and confess and be free from the horror of his condition, to find the beauty he perceived about him. Saul stayed there a long time. When he did get up, the first thing he did was to go back to his bar and pour all his liquor down the mountainside. He was through with it. Forever.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Drost, *Bill Drost The Pentecost*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1983, 114-17.

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# *Life!* *Journal*

Acts 9:4-5, 20

And he fell to the earth,  
and heard a voice saying unto him,  
Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord?

And the Lord said,

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:  
it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks....

And straightway he preached  
Christ in the synagogues,  
that he is the Son of God.

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