

Acts 9:26 - 30

AC 9:26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰ When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

AC 9:31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

1. Tried to become part of church but wasn't trusted. V26

AC 9:26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

In some ways this is a real sad verse. In other ways it shows some real common sense. Saul who became Paul wanted to join the church, but people didn't trust him. Hey, did he meet the requirements??? Yep he was Baptisted, but he had a history. This is a hard one. Do we blindly believe everyone, or do we sit on it and wait, call for references? We have a structure here. That is to be members, Must be a christian, must be Baptised, must be interviewed by a member of the diaconate or leadership. But are we talking about church membership or what. No, we are talking about people having fellowship. Getting together, coming to church. The structures hadn't been developed then, so the disciples where just scared to include Saul who became. How do we work out who is a christian and who isn't? Firstly, its probably not our concern. That's for God. Our job is to help people on their journey.

Secondly, we will know a christian by his example of love. We will know a christian by he lifestyle of love. I think we can tell a christian by their developing lifestyle of love. It doesn't happen over night but it does happen

2. Barnabas – became an advocate

²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

An advocate is someone who pleads a case for someone else. Barnabas took up Saul who became Paul's case. We need to do that. We are a church that has each deacon assigned as advocates for a ministry. They plead the case for that ministry. We need to be advocates for people in need. Sometimes I am called on to do character references for people, I am an advocate for that person in that situation.

That is our system. We need to extend that from a diaconate level to a personal level. We need to be advocates for people in a spiritual sense also. Taking them to Jesus, introducing them to Jesus, explaining Jesus to them, explaining how the process works. It is something like we talked about over the weeks when we said we need mentors, disciples and advocates is all part of that thought process. We can all mentor someone and have a mentor ourselves, and part of it is this advocate idea.

3. Stayed, spoke – spent time there.

²⁸ So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

The Greek words for the first phrase Saul stayed with them is kai hon met auton “He was with them” He was with them not only in location but in like mind. The other thing here is that he exposed himself to the teaching of the disciples. He was with them so they could talk, exchange ideas and learn.

Now, here we have a real principle of spiritual growth. Be with people who can teach you. Stay with them, spend time with them so you can become like minded. Gain, it’s the mentor thing. Find someone to spiritually be with.

This can work, Find someone to mentor you and encourage them to find someone to mentor them. After you have found a mentor, find someone you can mentor. And then teach them how to. If you don’t know how, come and see me and we’ll talk. If enough people are interested we’ll run a course on it.

4. Did his job – recognised his next step and did it.

²⁹ He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

Saul who became Paul was on a journey. One step at a time. Notice here, he talked to the Grecian Jews. The Jews who spoke greek and / the ones who probably were not pure blood Jews. He was a Jew but from Tarus, He knew greek, he had a target audience. His skills in not only Jewish religion and theology but he also had skills in greek style debating and argument. He had a ministry right off. Talking to people like himself about Jesus. Yeh, next step – talking to people like himself. At some stage, that is our next step. It maybe now, it may be in the future. But it will come. Who is like you? They need to know Jesus. Now, that doesn’t mean that our talking about Jesus is only with people who don’t believe, some of it will be talking about Jesus to fellow christians. It is one thing that doesn’t happen all that often. After church we talk about the sport, the weekend, whats happening this week, but rarely about where we are at with Jesus. Last week was different. People talked about it. With people have talked about the next step to me during the week, people are thinking about next steps as a church. Some people talked about Baptism, some talked about doing ministry, some talked about, person life changes, some people talked about what we could do as a church.

Next steps all together, this is some journey.

And we are on it together. Saul who became Paul learnt that too.

5. When a fellow christian is in danger – do what is necessary to protect them

³⁰ When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Notice, they looked after him. Took him away from danger. Hey didn't send him away by himself, they took him. Then they sent him away by himself, when it was safe. Yeh, we are on this journey together.

We could take this point much further and say a lot more about it, but we will just focus on one point.

Christianity is about Jesus. It is about Jesus in our lives. It is not about Jesus in one life. It is about Jesus in all our lives. When it becomes a selfish thing its not christianity it is sin. Ask not what God can do for you but what you can do for God. Great quote sounds nice but we need to put that into practice.

The Next step – What can I do for God? Maybe it is protecting people, maybe it is telling people about Jesus, maybe it is doing something with church, maybe it is spending time with people, maybe it is mentoring people.

This church IS doing some of this. How exciting is that?. This church is having a go, people are growing people are changing for Jesus. Let's keep focussing on one step at a time.