



latechurch

study guide

Introduction

Part of the way we help each other grow as followers of Jesus is by meeting together around God's Word to discuss what it means and how it applies to our lives. If you're in a Growth Group, I'm preaching to the converted! But the difference between a good Growth Group and a not-so-good Growth Group is the willingness and opportunity to **SHARE & DISCUSS**. Because of this, we're seeking to slightly change the format of the Growth Group studies.

Firstly, we want to encourage everyone in mpc to be reading God's Word by themselves regularly. Therefore, part of the study each week will involve a section that won't actually be looked at when you meet as a Growth Group. This section (called '**Personal Preparation**') will cover the passage in more detail than you could possibly do when you meet.

The Personal Preparation is broken up into bite-size chunks (4-5 questions) so that you can knock them over during the week in 10-15 minute slots. There'll be 2-3 of these each week, depending on the passage size.

The questions we'll discuss when we meet as a group are the '**Growth Group Discussion Questions**'. This will give you more time as a group to discuss those bits you found hard to understand, the theme and thrust of the passage, and how it applies to your life – as well as the privilege of praying for each other about all these things. While these questions are sometimes more general in nature, they'll draw out of what you'll have looked at in your preparation during the week.

While you'll still be able to participate and benefit if you haven't done the preparation, both you and the group will benefit more from preparing beforehand, and coming ready to share what you've learnt and thought about. So while you don't have to, it's a great way of both growing personally, and also of serving your group and your leader.

Through God's Spirit, the more you put into His Word, the more you'll get out.
Derek Hanna.

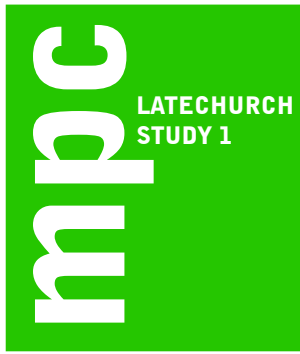
booklet contents

STUDY 1:

- **Personal Preparation: Pgs 2-3**
- **Growth Group Discussion: Pgs 4-5**

STUDY 2:

- **Personal Preparation: Pgs 6-7**
- **Growth Group Discussion: Pgs 8-9**



Acts 9:1-31 – An Amazing Transformation



Personal Preparation 1 – Saul the Murderer

Now we all know Paul the Apostle, but the power of this chapter of Acts is in knowing Saul the Murderer. Luke (who wrote Acts) thinks that this story is so important that he tells it three times in this one book.

Read all three accounts of Saul’s conversion in Acts 9:1-9, 22:3-11 and 26:9-18.

1. What kind of character do these three sections build of Saul? What’s the evidence he was like this?
2. What do you think Saul’s problem with the Christian message is? (Other helpful passages are 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 and Philippians 3:4-6)
3. What happens to Saul on the road to Damascus? What does the experience demonstrate to Saul about the key claims Christians were making about Jesus?
4. Considering what Saul had been doing, what’s strange about Jesus words in v.4 & v.5?

FOR TODAY: Do you consider yourself so closely aligned with Jesus that when you are persecuted, Jesus takes it personally?



Personal Preparation 2 – Saul the Saved

You can understand the caution of the other Christians, can’t you? One minute he’s making sure the rocks are thrown accurately, and the next the only thing he’s throwing at you is a whole lotta love! But such is the power of the risen Christ that even the most hardened hearts can’t stand in the way.

Let’s have a look at the impact the new and improved Saul of Tarsus had on the early church.

Read Acts 9:10-31

1. Have a look through this section, and note down the different reactions to Saul after his conversion.

Person(s) & Verse	Reaction
Ananias - vv.10-17	
The Jews - v.23	
The Disciples - v.26	
Barnabas - v.27	
The Grecian Jews - v.29	

2. Saul is characterized in v.1-2 as someone who breathes out murderous threats. What are the actions and speech that characterize Saul in vv.10-31?
3. What is the mission and message Jesus gives Saul? (Look at Acts 9:15-16 & Acts 26:15-23 and put it into your own words) What's the irony between this mission and Saul's previous self-appointed mission?
4. Given that Saul set out to destroy the Church, what do we see the results are of his actions by the end of the Chapter? (v.31) What do you think it means that they lived "in the fear of the Lord"?

FOR TODAY: When was the last time you recalled God's mercy for you in Christ? In what ways do you think latechurch is being strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit?

thoughts. questions. insights.

Growth Group Discussion Questions

Welcome back to Acts! We started working through this amazing book of the New Testament at the start of the year. It's now time to get back into it. The section we're going through covers the time of the conversion of a murderous Jewish man named Saul (Ch 9), through to the first committee meeting of the Christian church (Ch 15). In this period all sorts of things happen, but a common theme keeps popping up – that salvation through Jesus Christ has now come to the Gentiles. For Gentiles (non-Jews) like us, this might seem ho-hum, but when you read through this part of Acts, this is like a lightning bolt moment! It takes everyone by surprise. Not only does this shock development cause offense for the Jews, it forces the predominantly Jewish Christian Church to work out how it should respond to Gentiles who come to faith in Jesus.

As we work our way through Acts, we're going back to the historical roots of our church. And as we learn how God back then had a heart for growing his church and sending the message of Jesus outwards, we'll learn that God has exactly the same priority today.

1. If you were to vote for the person "most likely never to become a Christian", who would you choose? Why?

If you had lived in the first century, you probably would have chosen Saul of Tarsus – and you wouldn't have been alone. In this passage we read the powerful story of a very unlikely convert. Do people ever really change? You bet! And Saul proves it.

Read Acts 9:1-31

2. What were the issues raised, question posed, new insights you had as you prepared this week?

3. From what you've seen of Saul (and what you read about in 1 Cor 1:22-23 & Phil 3:4-6), what gets him so fired up about Christians and their message?¹ Do you see the same kind of hostility in the world today? Is it for the same reason?

4. From Jesus' comments in vv.4-5, what kind of relationship do you see between Jesus and those who follow Him? Why do you think Jesus sees it like that? (Can you think of any other Bible passages or ideas supporting that?)

5. In light of verses 1-2, what is the turnaround in Saul's life, and the ironic situation he finds himself in after his conversion? What is Luke trying to emphasise?

Verses	Contrast / Irony / Emphasis
vv.15-16	
v.20	

¹ It's probably the same thing that got the Jews fired up over in Acts 9:23, 29

Verses	Contrast / Irony / Emphasis
v.22	
vv.23-24	
v.29	
v.31	

6. Looking back at the last time we saw Saul (Acts 8:1-3), what change has come over the Church? (v.31) What does this say about the power of the risen Lord Jesus?

Not many of us have had the same sort of dramatic encounter with Jesus that Saul had – and not many of us would want the mission that was given to Saul given to us (Check out 9:15-16). But Jesus, through Paul changed the course of the Church, and made possible the spread of the gospel to ‘the ends of the earth’. This was an unexpected, but world-changing transformation!

7. Paul had the Damascus road experience to know when he came to know Jesus, and the change in his life is recorded for everyone to see. Discuss and share the following:

- ⦿ Do you need to be able to pinpoint when you became a Christian?
- ⦿ Does there need to be a dramatic transformation after you become a Christian?
- ⦿ Do Christians need to have an impact on the world around them?
- ⦿ Do you think that when you are persecuted, Jesus takes it personally? What does that mean for how you react?
- ⦿ What does this passage say about that person you mentioned at the start of the study?

pray.

- For those you know who are hard of heart, that God might have mercy on them.
- Thank God for the mercy he has shown us in Christ.

remember.

- Men’s Training Event this weekend (7-8 Sep). It’s not too late to sign-up!
- Growth Group Trivia Night: 19 Sep.