

EPC Discussion Guide for Acts 9:26-31

EPC Discussion Guides provide context and teaching to discuss a passage of Scripture. Many of these guides are usually companions to sermons. But the discussion guide will provide enough material for those who did not hear the sermon to discuss the passage. Group leaders are encouraged to order questions and emphases according to the needs of their particular group.

Read Acts 9:26-31

And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.²⁸ So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.²⁹ And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him.³⁰ And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

1. Saul had an incredible personal experience of Jesus Christ. He was entrusted with ministry. Yet, he repeated attempts to “join” the disciples. This very is a strong verb (used also in 1st Corinthians 6:16-17). *Why do you think that Saul was so adamant about joining the disciples? Why did he not simply do his own thing?*
2. *How would you interact with someone who claims to be a disciple of Christ but does not want to join a local congregation? What truths would you speak, in love, to help them see the church as Paul sees the church? Related, what arguments would you make in favor of formal church membership?* (If you have time, consider how Ephesians 4:11-16, Ephesians 5:25 and John 10:14-15, Hebrews 13:17 might inform such interactions)
3. Barnabas *takes* Paul, *brings* Paul to the Apostles, and *declares* what has happened to Paul in such a way that Paul is embraced by the brothers in Jerusalem. Presumably, at some point prior to this, Barnabas had noticed Paul, overcome his own fears of Paul and listened to him before he took the initiative to “take” Paul. If Barnabas sets an example for us to follow, how can we be more like him? Put another way, *how can we improve in recognizing the ‘outsider,’ listening to him, and taking the initiative to bring him to ourselves and to our fellowship?*
4. Saul’s relationship to the church is now completely different than it was at the beginning of chapter 9. Now he is freely moving “in and out,” of their midst. He moves in for fellowship and worship. He moves out for the mission of “preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.” He is now so loved and treasured that the brothers he was “brought” to now “bring” him out of the city to safety. Few of us have had to flee anywhere because of our Christian testimonies, but most of

us will know what it is like to have believers in the church support us in times of great trial and distress. *In what ways have you experienced this kind of love within the body of Christ?*

5. Acts 9:31 is a summary statement. This statement begins with “so,” indicating that the peace the church was having was a result of Saul’s conversion. With the conversion of Saul, the “program” of persecution that he was orchestrating seems to have come to a halt. There was still persecution but it was no longer a systematic organized effort. The church multiplied too, as the people of God walked in fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. *If Christ secures salvation on our behalf then we shouldn’t have to live in fear of Hell. But if that is the case, what room is there for “fear of the Lord?” How can we cultivate such healthy fear? In what ways does the Holy Spirit comfort the people of God? What things might keep us from experiencing that comfort?*
6. Spend some time praying that our church would be a Barnabas-like church. Include not only the pastors/elders and deacons but the folks you sat next to (or near) this past Sunday. Pray that God would help us to initiate relationships with the ‘outsider,’ learn what God is doing in their lives, and bring them to our fellowship that God might further his work in them and through them. Pray specifically for Christianity Explored, International Student Ministries, MOPS and DivorceCare who make such work their primary goal. Pray as well for our congregation to walk in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.