

LESSON 9

STUDY NINE

EVANGELISM – GOD OPENS EYES!

The Book of Acts contains much information about evangelism. Throughout Acts many of the acts are incidents of sharing of the message of Jesus with non-believers.

Wherever Paul went he seized the opportunity to share Jesus and the message about his death and resurrection with others. Such passion for sharing Jesus was key to the growth of the first century church. That same focus on doing evangelism is key to the growth of the church today and into the future.



Before getting into this focus on evangelism in Acts spend some time discussing the role of evangelism in your life and in the life of your congregation. What does your congregation do to equip you to be an effective witness in your day-to-day life? What does your congregation do to share Christ with the people in your community (your mission field)? Evangelism (sharing Christ with the non-believer) is a high priority in Acts. Where is it in the scheme of things in your congregation?

God opens doors! As we have worked with that theme in these Acts Bible studies we've seen how "open doors" refers to opportunities God places before us to do mission work (Acts 14:27). "God opens doors" means God places before us opportunities to reach people with the Good News concerning Christ. In this lesson it is not open doors used as the outreach image, but rather OPEN EYES. As we go through those open doors, we go to people so that their eyes might be opened to Jesus and the new life all can have through faith in Christ Jesus. As Christians reach out with the Gospel (evangelism) they become spiritual eye openers!

Before looking at Acts 26: 9-18 consider this background:

- This section of Acts is part of Paul's defense of his ministry before King Agrippa (this is Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I, Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great. He is the Herod who died in Acts 12:23. Agrippa II was appointed by Rome to supervise the priesthood and temple in Jerusalem.)
- This is the third time the conversion incident in Paul's life is recorded in Acts (9:1-19; 22:5-16). Obviously, this is a key event for Luke in developing Acts since he records it three times. Discuss what is so significant about Paul's conversion that Luke records it three times in Acts?
- The Jewish people want Paul to die. Look at Acts 24:1-8 for the charges against Paul.
- Paul defends his actions and ministry direction by recounting to his accusers his conversion and call into the ministry by the risen Christ – his Damascus road experience. He has done what he has done because God called him into this ministry, this mission work to the Gentiles. That's Paul's defense!
- In Acts 26:9-18 we are looking at a portion of that defense before the king. How is this incident fulfillment of Jesus' statement to Ananias concerning Paul in Acts 9:15-16?



Acts 26:9-23

9 *"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

10 *And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they*

were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

12 "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

13 About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions.

14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.



16 'Now get up and stand and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them
18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.

20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.

21 That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

22 But I have had God's help to this very

day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen--

23 that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

As we consider evangelism in this lesson re-read Acts 26:9-23 (above)



- Circle the verbs in verses 9-11. Review Paul's life and activity prior to his conversion.
- According to verse 16 the Lord Jesus appoints Paul to do two things. What are they?
- Now look at verses 17-18. Write it out in the space below:

I SEND YOU

- Paul was sent by God to the Gentile people "to open their eyes." Read Acts 9:8-9. What was Paul's condition? What was the image God used in 26:18 to describe Paul's new mission? What impact do you think all this had upon Paul?
- Verse 18 addresses the content of Paul's message; that is, what should happen to people when God opens their eyes. In your words, what is the content of Paul's message?
- In today's world, what is the picture of Jesus most non-believers see? As God uses you to open their eyes to see Jesus, how is your view of Jesus different from most views of Jesus?

- What does Jesus mean when he talks about people “turning”?
- The second half of verse 18 describes the two gifts that come from knowing and believing the Gospel. What are they?
- Someone said: “the only people who like change are babies with full diapers.” Based upon what happens when we come to know Christ (“eyes opened”) how are we prepared by that event to accept and embrace change?
- Share with one another the events surrounding your conversion, when you turned from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God. Don’t forget to connect the event of your conversion (if appropriate) to the event described in Romans 6:3-11.
- After Paul’s defense Agrippa responds to Paul: “In a short time you think to make me a Christian!” Paul responds to the king: “whether short or long, I pray God that not



only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am – except for these chains.” Paul prayed for non-Christians.

Discuss the connect between evangelism and prayer. If you haven’t already done so, make a list of

friends, neighbors or family members who are not followers of Jesus. Pray for these people daily. Pray that God would open doors of opportunity for you to open their eyes to the Jesus who brings light, life and forgiveness of sins through faith in him, the crucified and risen Savior.

- 1 Peter 3:15-16 tells us we should do in our lives exactly what we observe Paul doing in Acts. Read those verses. What practical

helps are given to us concerning our witness to others? The passage says we should always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope in you. What is your hope? Share with one another in the class your “defense” of the hope in you.

- Look up these passages in Acts and discuss their connection with evangelism:

Acts 4:12, Acts 4:18-20
 Acts 8:35, Acts 13:38-41
 Acts 14:21-22, Acts 28:30-31

- Nike shoes for many years had a slogan: “Just do it!” What does that slogan teach us, when it comes to evangelizing people with the message of Jesus?
- Close your session with prayers for non-believers. Be specific. Ask God’s help to equip you to witness Christ to others, to be a “spiritual eye opener”!

NOTES: