

**“I’ve Become a Christian – Now What?” (Part 1)**  
**Acts 9:19-29**

**Introduction:**

1. When a person experiences salvation through Jesus Christ, changes begin to happen both inwardly and outwardly.
  - **Illustration:** Before I placed my faith in Christ, I had been involved in religion. Sometimes it made me feel good, and I would change for a very short time. But after I trusted Christ, lasting change began to happen.
2. After a person gets saved, God’s Spirit comes to live in that person. God’s Spirit immediately begins doing two things in people:
  - He begins to conform them into the image of Jesus Christ so that their lives will begin to reflect the attitude and character of Christ. Romans 8:29
  - He begins preparing them to be vessels that He can use. 2 Timothy 2:21
3. This morning, we will once again examine Saul of Tarsus – the man who was the chief enemy of Christ, but was saved and turned to Christ on the road to Damascus. He would become known as the apostle Paul and write 13 books of the New Testament.
4. How did Paul’s life change after He was saved? Paul said he was a pattern to those who would be saved after him (1 Timothy 1:16), so I believe we can look at what happened to Paul and learn a lot. After you become a Christian, what can you expect?

**You may initially go through times of loneliness.**

1. Somewhere within the time context of Acts 9:19-25, we know that God led Paul into the wilderness area of Arabia for awhile. Paul mentions this in Galatians 1:15-18.
2. It appears that this was a desolate wilderness area where Paul was isolated from others and was all alone. Paul was not the only saint to spend time in the wilderness (Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Christ).
3. It is not unusual for a new believer to go through times of loneliness, especially after you are first saved. It is a wonderful feeling to know you are saved and on your way to heaven. But at first, it can be a very lonely time.
  - You don’t want to participate in the things your old friends may be doing, but you’re uncomfortable and unsure of how to act and talk around other Christians.
  - You can feel like a soldier with no army, a student with no school, a player with no team, a bee with no hive.
4. But God had a purpose for allowing Paul to go through this isolation of Arabia.
  - It was in this time period that God revealed to Paul the wonderful truths of the gospel that we understand today. Galatians 1:11-12
  - Through this Arabian experience, God drew very close to Paul and showed Himself mightily in Paul.
5. Have you ever been through an Arabian time period where you felt like it was just you and God? You felt all alone and nobody else understood. It was just you, your

- Bible, and God. Odds are, you learned more about God during that time than ever before.
6. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he again went through an initial time of loneliness (vs. 26). Paul was experiencing some growing pains in his new relationship with Christ.
    - His old crowd didn't want anything to do with him now that he was saved.
    - The Christian crowd was very leery of him because of his reputation and past.
  7. But God used a man by the name of Barnabas to encourage and help Paul. vs. 27-28
    - "*But Barnabas took him and brought him...*" This is precious. What an encouragement this must have been to Paul.
    - Maybe God can use you to be a Barnabas to someone else.
  8. Barnabas became a very dear friend to Paul, which brings me to my next point. What can you expect after you become a Christian? You may initially go through some times of loneliness, but here is the good news...

### **You will begin to develop a new circle of friends. vs. 19, 25, 26-28**

1. Paul's salvation changed his associations dramatically. Instead of being with people who hated Christ and persecuted Christians, Paul's friends were believers in Christ.
2. Paul began to develop a new circle of friends. I wonder what happened to his old buddies from the Damascus road. Scripture says nothing about them, so it seems doubtful that any of them followed in Paul's footsteps. In fact, they may have persecuted Paul.
3. It is absolutely essential that new believers immediately begin to establish relationships with other believers. Why is this so important?
  - Many times, we just don't fit in with our old crowd any more. It is not that you drop your old friends, but many times they will drop you because you aren't interested in those old ways. You are a new person. 1 Peter 4:3-4
  - Not only this, it is also important because we learn so much by being around other believers. So much of spiritual growth is **caught** rather than **taught**. We can learn more by simply hanging out with a mature believer and watching than we will from a Bible lesson. The best way to learn how to pray is to listen to a mature believer pray (witness, treat your wife, etc.).
  - This is why it is so crucial that every person here at CrossRoads get in a L.I.F.E. Group. It is invaluable. Do you know what the "F" stand for in L.I.F.E.? Friendship!
4. God sets a high precedent on our friendships and relationships with others. A godly circle of friends is so important. Proverbs 2:20, 4:14-15, 9:6, 12:11, 13:20, 14:7, 22:24-25, 28:7
5. It is important that we understand that God will not drop godly friends to you out of the sky. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he made the first move and sought to join the other disciples. vs. 26; cf. Proverbs 18:24

6. If a person comes only to Sunday morning worship, refuses to get in a L.I.F.E. Group, and doesn't get involved in any ministries, he probably won't find many friends. We must do our part and take some initiative.

**In Conclusion:**

1. Maybe you are a fairly new believer today, and you are experiencing some growing pains in your new relationship with Christ. This is natural and normal. Paul went through this also.
2. You need a circle of people that you know will pray for you, encourage you, and help you in your walk with Jesus Christ.
3. Have you joined yourself to a local church? Have you become part of a L.I.F.E. Group? Are you involved serving God with other believers? All of these are great decisions for any new believer in Christ.