

"THE ROAD FROM HERE"

(Acts 9:1-22)

(Chuck Swindoll)

Saul's conversion experience was like no other. Most people don't receive a supernatural, in-person encounter with the risen Christ! Even so, I find in his experience a paradigm that applies to the birth and nurturing of all new Christians. Take note of the events following Saul's conversion.

A Relationship

Immediately after Saul's encounter with Christ, the Lord sent a mature believer to minister to him. Ananias became his friend, advocate, and guide. Paul had questions; Ananias offered answers. Paul needed the companionship of someone who had experienced this transformation; Ananias became his first Christian companion. It's a jolting, sometimes overwhelming experience when the Holy Spirit first takes up residence in a new believer; he or she needs someone to help with those first halting steps as life begins from a completely new perspective.

A Community

Ananias didn't shoulder this burden alone; he quickly introduced Saul to the community of believers in Damascus. They, in turn, helped Paul determine what he should do next. They supported his convictions, they protected him from his enemies, and they nurtured his growth as a believer. The church helped Saul begin to rewrite his theology now that he had met the Messiah. Their support led to the next stage of Paul's transformation.

An Education

Though Paul jumped into evangelism and preaching immediately, his Damascus road experience and obvious call to ministry didn't mean he could circumvent doctrinal and practical preparation. Though we don't know exactly what he did there, Paul left Damascus to spend time in Arabia (Gal. 1:17). Perhaps he was studying, meditating, and communing with the Lord and even receiving special revelations from the Holy Spirit. After an unspecified time period, he returned to Damascus and then Jerusalem (see Gal. 1:17-18). Still his practical ministry preparation wasn't complete. Long before his call to work among Gentile converts in Antioch and his famous send-off with Barnabas on the first missionary journey, Paul relocated to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:29-30), where he spent ten years studying and laboring in ministry. Only then, after much doctrinal and practical preparation, did God launch Paul into his role as an apostle.

A Reproduction

With his own spiritual development well underway, Saul the Pharisee was transformed into Paul the apostle, and he began to reproduce as a believer. His testimony became the basis of a worldwide evangelistic ministry whereby his faith brought others to faith in Jesus Christ. And that's what God intends for everyone who becomes a part of His kingdom: disciples making disciples, who make more disciples.

