

# PAUL

## A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

### STUDY SIX

## Out of the Shadows

*Acts 11:19–26*

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*The Lord called Saul from weakness and brokenness and obscurity and neglect. The Lord placed his feet on a rock and said, “Now is the time.” The believers were first called Christians in Antioch. What a difference Saul’s teaching made, because Saul was different.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**L**IFE is like a game! Most of us want to be in the arena. We want to do our part, to be in the action, to have some fun. What athlete enjoys being on the sideline?

Imagine you’re entering your first year as a collegiate swimmer. You just completed an intense preseason training regimen in anticipation of joining the relay groups. You’re ready! Skilled up and full of excitement, you want to help bring home the championship. So, patiently, you wait for the day your coach posts his picks.

The day arrives. You scan through his selections . . . and . . . you see your name . . . at the bottom. Not chosen. Except for a couple of races here and there, the coach practically put you on the shelf for the season.

It’s tough when life throws you into a season of waiting. You feel alone and unwanted, like you’re *in the shadows*. Perhaps you know that feeling all too well, or perhaps, you can only imagine it at this point in your life. We’ll all be there at some point. But being in the shadows doesn’t mean God has overlooked you. In fact, He does some of His best work in our lives when we’re in that protracted period of *waiting . . . and waiting . . . and waiting*.

Then, when you stop expecting a change and feel the least ready for something new, God taps you on the shoulder. After Saul spent years in Arabia, he anticipated entering into God’s work immediately. But God put him on the bench for years in Tarsus . . . until Barnabas came knocking at his door. Let’s explore what Paul learned waiting in Tarsus and how God used the Son of Encouragement to call Saul out of the shadows.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

Perhaps you're in a period of waiting on the Lord, uncertain about what He's doing with you and why you're on the sidelines. What's the point? Has He forgotten you? Express your frustrations and disappointments to your Father and request comfort, clarity, and direction through your time in His Word.



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Saul's conversion stirred up a whirlwind for Saul. He was physically blinded for three days and then spent three years in solitude and obscurity in the Arabian desert. Back in Damascus, the Jews tried to kill him, but some believers—the same people Saul once sought to kill—saved his life by lowering him over that wall in a food basket. He journeyed to Jerusalem, where skeptical Christians doubted his faith and a group of Hellenistic Jews plotted his death. Friends rushed him to safety by sending him back to Tarsus, his hometown, by way of Caesarea.

Whew. All of that, with unnamed believers assisting him along the way. While Saul enjoyed sporadic opportunities to proclaim the Messiah, his life reflected anything BUT the apparently big plans Jesus had for him. Had he misunderstood the Lord? Where was the glorious movement of God's hand upon Saul's promised ministry?

Saul's faith journey reflects an unforgettable principle: *Exceptional work is preceded by extended waiting.* How does Saul's experience remind you of your own faith journey?





## Observation and Interpretation: Others in the Spotlight

While Saul was in waiting, God was building and strengthening and expanding His church through others. Saul wasn't ready to help lead God's people, and God's people weren't ready for his leadership.

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In the following charts, let's explore how God prepared both Saul and the church. For interpretation, use your Bible-study resources like *Constable's Notes* (netbible.org), *IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts* (biblegateway.com), and the *Holman Bible Dictionary* (studylight.org).<sup>1</sup>

<b>Peter in the Spotlight</b> <i>Acts 10:1–48</i>	
As Saul lived in the shadows at Tarsus, the apostle Peter and his ministry shone brightly in the spotlight. Jewish Christians needed to enlarge their vision of God's worldwide mission.	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
Read <i>Acts 10:1–26</i> . Record key observations about the main characters, the locations ( <i>Caesarea, Joppa</i> ), and the themes.	What is the meaning of Peter's vision?
	What is the significance of Peter meeting with Cornelius?
Continue your reading in <i>10:27–48</i> . Record your top five observations.	How does Acts 10 relate to Ananias' revelation in <i>9:15</i> ?

*Through Cornelius, Peter got a glimpse of gentile ministry.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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*Acts 11:19–26*

## Barnabas and Other Believers in the Spotlight

*Acts 11:19–24*

After the apostle Peter helped launch God’s ministry to the gentiles, the spotlight turns to Barnabas and other believers—while Saul remained in Tarsus.



### Observation

Read *Acts 11:19–24*. Record key observations about the main characters, the locations (*Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch*), and the themes.

According to 11:19–21, who was responsible for driving the growth of the church? What people group showed the most converts?



### Interpretation

How does Acts 11:19–24 relate to God’s revelation to Ananias in *9:15*?



Why do you think the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch? Review his roots in *4:36*. What is the connection?

According to 11:23, what was Barnabas’ primary task for the church in Antioch?

*Barnabas was a Cypriot. There were people from Cyprus. He knew that culture. He knew that language. He understood those people. He also had his eyes opened regarding the gentiles. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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<b>“Now Is the Time!” —God</b> <i>Acts 11:25–26</i>	
With the church in Antioch blooming, Barnabas realizes he could use some help.	
 <b>Observation</b>	 <b>Interpretation</b>
Reread <i>Acts 9:30–31</i> and then read <i>11:25–26</i> . Record your observations.	Given the circumstances in Antioch we read about in Acts 11:19–24, why do you think Barnabas sought Saul?
According to 9:30–31, where was Saul sent? What was the condition of the church after Saul’s departure?	What do you imagine Saul thought and felt when he received Barnabas’ invitation?

*Barnabas gets alone with the Lord and realizes he needs help. He’s got an enormous revival on his hands. He doesn’t have the gifts necessary, nor the energy necessary, nor the knowledge necessary to teach these people as he should. And he remembers one who does. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## Correlation: Preparation through Waiting

God routinely uses the principle of *waiting* and *resting* in the lives of His saints. Let's take a look at this topic from several angles to fill out our understanding of God's design.

Start with *Psalms 27:14*. What command did David include with *waiting*?

Consider *37:7*. What counsel did David offer while *waiting* on the Lord?

Look at *37:34*. What additional direction and promise did David highlight for us as we wait?

Romans 8 is an exalted chapter on living by the Spirit in anticipation of our future deliverance from the curse. A principle on waiting surfaces in *Romans 8:25*. Summarize this principle.

*Very few people jump into exceptional work even though we all want to. It takes honing. It takes shaping. It takes breaking. It takes polishing. It takes reshaping. It takes waiting. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## **Application: Go . . . and Wait Likewise**

Four vital principles flow from Saul's experience of waiting in the shadows.

1. *When God prepares us for effective ministry, He includes what we would rather omit—a period of waiting.* That builds endurance.
2. *As God makes us wait, hiding us in the shadows, He shows us we're not indispensable.* That builds humility.
3. *While God hides us away, He reveals new dimensions of Himself and new insights regarding ministry.* That builds depth in us.
4. *When God finally chooses to use us, it arrives at a time we least expect and we feel least qualified.* That makes us effective.

Which of these points prove most relevant in your season of life right now? Do you feel as though you are in the shadows? How has this study given you insight and encouragement?

What lessons has God taught you during your periods of waiting? What character qualities blossomed?

Is there a loved one in your circle who is living in the shadows? How can you use your experiences to help him or her or maybe even become a “Barnabas” to them?

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*Every person at this moment has something she or he is hoping for that hasn't yet happened. My answer? "Wait eagerly for it with perseverance."*

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



## A FINAL PRAYER

Close your study by reflecting on this prayer, and then spend a moment lifting up your own prayer to the Lord.

*Lord, I want to thank You for Your patience with us when we have so often rushed ahead. Forgive us, our Father, for wasted effort, for hurried moments when we must have tried Your long-suffering. Deliberately teach us to wait. And in the process, deepen us for that exceptional work to which You have called us, whatever it may be. I ask it through Christ. Amen.*

### ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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