

Stabbed 9 Times, Damascus Road Moment Sparks Evangelist's Ministry

Pastor Todd Coconato wouldn't dare compare himself to the apostle Paul. Before he came to know Christ, he shared a lot of the characteristics of the man called Saul, who hated and persecuted Christians.

But then Coconato, now a national speaker, evangelist and media personality, had his own "Damascus Road" moment. Stabbed nine times by a man while in Granada Hills, California, Coconato, says that incident was a "game changer" for him, transforming his life from an angry atheist to one who enthusiastically spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ every day through several venues.

After the stabbing, Coconato, a former child actor in Hollywood, somehow found himself being driven to the hospital by the man who tried to kill him.

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"Thank God he did that because, and I believe it's because, he knew that I was going to die," Coconato told Charisma News' John Matarazzo. "On the way to the hospital, I went into the presence of the Lord, and I heard the audible voice of the Lord say, 'Do you want to live or do you want to die.' I said, 'I want to live.'"

"The Lord said 'Well, if you live, you've got to tell people that I'm real and you have got to be sold out for me for the rest of your life.' What do you say when your life is in the balance and the God of heaven and Earth is audibly speaking to you? It's kind of like Isaiah chapter six—send me, I'll go. I

say, 'Yes, Lord,' and so I awakened in the hospital and this woman looked at me and she said, 'There's no way you should be alive because you've lost so much blood. We just had someone that was stabbed two times and they just died. You got stabbed nine times, and one of them was in the heart, and yet here you are, still alive.'"

It was then that Coconato knew that God had performed a miracle that had spared his life. Although it was some 26 years ago, he says he'll never forget that encounter with God because it was "so real."

He remembers the incident in great detail more than two and a half decades later.

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Many people he encounters from his past, Coconato says, laugh at him knowing what he was like back then and seeing the transformation that has made him a strong voice for Jesus.

"When you have an encounter with the Holy Spirit, you have a true encounter with the Lord," says Coconato, who has written a book titled "Come Out From Among Them" (Charisma House, 2023). "When you have that, you can never forget the realness and the power and authority of the Holy Spirit when you have a true encounter with the Lord. And that's what happened.

✖ "Every single aspect of my life changed, and I walked through a season of deliverance and healing. God was really ordering my steps. I always tell this story, though, because it's important to know that I was coming from the club scene, the underground club scene in Los Angeles, one of the world's hippest club scenes. So, I was like a club kid and then I came from Hollywood.

"When I stepped into a church, I was nervous. I was sweating.

I felt like I didn't belong. I thought a lightning bolt was going to strike me. I thought I wasn't worthy. For two years, it was very hard for me to get into the Christian culture, to break into it. ... There were people that didn't really like me, and I didn't like them because we didn't relate to each other. There's a period when you're coming out of a world of sin and darkness and that's everything you've known. ...

And now Coconato is part of what he believes is a strong revival happening around in our nation and he says he believes it is going to accelerate "as the hour gets later."

"While there is this move of God, there are going to be misfits and prodigals and people with tattoos and earrings and people that you wouldn't normally expect to be in a church," he says. "I can relate to that because that was me."

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