

# Joyce Meyer: Discover the Freedom to Live for God

When God called me to teach His Word, my extended family and friends were not pleased. The church I attended was not pleased, and many people tried to change my mind by making it clear that if I chose to move forward with a ministry of teaching God's Word, I would no longer be welcome in their midst.

I was asked to leave my church because God had called me to do something for Him that did not fit into their traditional theology. At the time it hurt me deeply, but later I realized that God used their rejection to get me to a place where I could learn what He wanted me to learn and go on to become the person He wanted me to be.

In Galatians 1:10 (NIV), the apostle Paul said, "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."

Before he became an apostle of Christ, Paul had been a zealous and committed Pharisee, which often caused him to persecute Christians. And he understood that initially after he accepted Christ as his Savior, if he sought people's approval, he might not get it because of his reputation as a man who had hunted Christians in order to arrest and persecute them.

Even though Paul was now a changed man, just as many believers are today, people don't always believe we have changed. Instead they see us as we have been in the past and refuse to see us as new creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). But God sees who and what we will become.

The account of Paul's conversion is in Acts 9:1–19, and I think it is important to include it in this section so we can

see how completely he was changed by an encounter with the living Christ. I am sharing his story in my own words, but I also recommend that you read it for yourself.

Paul (known as Saul at this point in his life) was still making threats of persecution and murder against the disciples of the Lord. He was a bystander in the crowd when Stephen, who was an esteemed disciple in the church, was stoned and perhaps threw some stones himself. He had gotten permission from the high priest of the local synagogue to capture and bring people he found to be believers in Christ to Jerusalem for trial.

As he traveled and approached Damascus, suddenly a light shone from heaven all around him. "He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'" (Acts 9:4). Saul asked who was talking to him, and the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:5-6).

Those traveling with Saul were astounded because they saw no one, yet they heard the voice of Jesus and witnessed what happened to Saul. When he rose from the ground, Saul was blind although his eyes were open. So they led him by the hand into the city of Damascus. For three days, he could see nothing and he did not eat or drink anything.

Now, the Lord had spoken to a disciple named Ananias in Damascus and told him where to find Saul and what to do. Ananias was afraid because he had heard of Saul's violent reputation, but the Lord assured him that He had chosen Saul as His instrument, so Ananias left to find him.

He went into the house where Saul was and did what God had instructed him to do. He laid his hands on Saul and told him he had been sent by Jesus to lay hands on him so he might regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and

he regained his sight, arose and was baptized. For some days after that, he remained with the disciples at Damascus and began immediately to proclaim the gospel he had previously persecuted. He declared Jesus to be the Son of God, and all who heard him were amazed.

What a transformation! I would imagine that many of us wish our experience had been so astounding, but God knows what each of us needs and He provides it. I am sure Saul needed something quite spectacular to change his mind, and God met him where he was and gave him what he needed.

As we do our best to live for God and follow His leading in our lives, He will do the same for us. God has an amazing plan for you, and He wants you to succeed in becoming everything He created you to be. You can fulfill His purpose when you choose to please God first and foremost, and set yourself free from pleasing people. {eo}

**Joyce Meyer** is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 135 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *The Power of Thank You (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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