

The word “conversion” implies a change. As a vehicle might be “converted” from gasoline power to diesel power; so an individual might be converted from not being a disciple of Jesus to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Thus, they will have changed their beliefs and behavior, their devotion and their commitment. In the New Testament book of Acts, we can read about the “conversion” of several people in the first century. It is helpful for us to observe the process of their conversion because the process remains the same for us today.

As we study each of the conversion accounts in Acts, we detect a total of Five Distinct Steps which are necessary in the conversion process. It was necessary for each person to first of all -- **Hear** about Jesus; then to **Believe** the message they heard; then to **Repent** (or turn away) from their former sinful actions; then to **Confess** their faith in Christ; and, finally, to be **Baptized** into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. It should not be surprising for us to see these steps reflected in the conversion accounts in Acts, for we have already seen these basic doctrinal points described in previous Bible Talks.

People sometimes wonder why all five steps are not found in every conversion account. In other words, when first century folks asked what they needed to do to be saved, why did New Testament evangelists give them varied answers? Why did they not include all five steps when answering each questioning sinner? The answer to this dilemma is both simple and logical. You see, the necessary steps directed to each person depended upon where they were when they inquired about salvation. If I was taking a trip to Saint Louis, and asking directions all along the way, I would not expect the same directions at every leg of the journey. While still at home, I would expect directions which included the very first highway I needed to take. But as my journey continued, I would not need each informant to begin back at home when giving directions. I would need directions from where I was then, not from where I began.

In Acts 2:37, people asked the question, “Brethren, what shall we do?” There was no need for the apostle Peter to tell them to **Hear** about Jesus, for he had just finished a sermon in which he told them all about the Lord. He did not need to tell them to **Believe** what they had heard, for the scripture says “they were pierced to the heart” by the message Peter spoke. It seems obvious, then, why Peter responded by saying, “**Repent**, and let each of you be **Baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins . . .” (Acts 2:38)

Conversely, the Philippian Jailer of Acts 16 did not know anything about Jesus. When he asked, “What must I do to be saved?” (in vs 30), he was told, “**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household” (vs 31). Paul began at the point of this man’s understanding (which was very limited). He instructed the man that **Faith** in Jesus was necessary for salvation. Having said this, Paul then proceeded to speak “the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house” (vs 32). The ultimate outcome of the jailer’s question resulted in his **Hearing** about Jesus, **Believing** the message, **Repenting** of his former cruelty (vs 33), and his consequent **Baptism** “that very hour of the night.” Paul began to answer his question by directing him to the initial steps of salvation (**Hearing** and **Believing**), but he did not fail to direct him to the culminating step of salvation, which is **Baptism**.

Look for yourself to other Conversion Accounts in Acts, you will see that none of them stopped at the point of Faith Alone, but in every case their **Faith** was followed by **Baptism**. Look to the conversion of the “Samaritans” (Acts 8:4-13), the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), the conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-18), the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48), the conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:11-15), as well as the accounts we have already seen in this Bible Talk. In every case, **Baptism** always followed one or more of the other necessary steps: **Hearing, Believing, Repentance, and Confession**.

These Conversion Accounts serve as an example of God’s plan for all mankind. Throughout the book of Acts we see the same message repeatedly preached with the same resulting responses.

Consequently, we can have confidence that if we **Hear** that same gospel message today and if we **Respond** in the same way as those in the first century, we will enjoy the same **Salvation** which was promised to them.



1. What do you think it means to be “converted” to Christ?

2. Name the five steps which are necessary in the conversion process. Look back through previous Bible Talk transcripts and provide at least one scripture to prove each step.

3. Why do we not find all five steps listed in any one conversion account in Acts?

4. When Peter answered the question of Acts 2:37, why did he not tell the people to “hear” and “believe”?

5. What did Peter tell the people to do “for the forgiveness of your sins” in Acts 2:38?

6. Why was it necessary for Paul to tell the Philippian Jailer to “believe in the Lord Jesus”?
(Acts 16:31)

7. List the steps of salvation which can be identified in the conversion of the Philippian jailer.
(Acts 16:30-33)

8. Read the 7 conversion accounts in Acts. Do you ever see an incident where faith is not followed by baptism? (Acts 2:37-41; 8:4-13; 8:26-39; 9:1-18; 10:1-48; 16:11-15; 16:30-33)

9. Do you believe these accounts serve as a pattern for conversions to Christ today?