



Transcript for Audio Teaching: [Module 2: Sight And Light](#)

Hi! This is Stacey. I want to welcome you to the audio lesson for Module 2 from my study journal called Deconstruction: Your Journey in Faith. If you have not yet purchased your copy, you can find it on Amazon. Each section has an accompanying audio file on my website, which is ClarityUnleashed.com. There you will also find opportunities to connect with me for personal coaching. I am also offering an online “small group style” coaching program utilizing the study journal. Without further delay, let’s explore Module 2: Sight And Light.

In Module 1 we discussed the wrestling match in Genesis 32 between Jacob and God and how wrestling serves as the foundation for our faith. Deconstruction typically involves wrestling with Bible translations, teachings, traditions, and personal experiences. We aren’t doing anything wrong when we ask God questions, when we evaluate teachings that seem harmful, or when we choose to leave a particular church because of harmful theology or practices. Remember the wonderful verse, Romans 8:38-39, which declares that truth over us. It reads, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”¹

You may have noticed that Module 1 did not give you the magic solution to your deconstruction. This study isn’t intended to provide you with answers. I do hope it helps

¹Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).



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connect you with Scripture in such a way that you recognize that you have freedom to ask questions of God and choose new ways to practice your faith.

As I communicate with survivors of abuse, we often agree that our experiences have changed how we interact with Scripture and view the church. In life we each experience and process pain, isolation, trauma, betrayal, and loss. Our personal experiences form our testimonies of how God meets us in those low moments in unexpected ways. We begin to see God more clearly. As you continue your faith journey I encourage you to share your testimony with others, and learn from their testimonies too.

You may meet people who have been marginalized and discarded by their churches but who dig deeply to hold on to faith. Be curious about their faith – what sustains them in times of isolation and doubt? How has God shown up for them in the midst of their struggles? It is a true blessing to share testimonies with someone who you believe you have little in common with. I believe that you will realize that faith in Christ is the only common ground you need to love them.

Module 2 is all about how we see the world. Sometimes we do not realize how blind we are until our sight is restored. This module introduces a blind man who is healed in secret by Jesus. Sometimes we feel like we are invisible to God. We will hear Hagar's story as validation that God sees the abused. The passage I've chosen to teach in this audio lesson is in Acts 9. It's a story I'm sure you have heard about Paul's experience on the road to Damascus. I see this passage as a description of Paul's deconstruction. What I hope you take-away from Module 2 is that God cares about our spiritual vision. He wants to restore our eyesight so we can see Him more clearly and see other people as He sees them.



Let's talk about Paul, a man who faithfully worshiped God. He was not only filled with the knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, but faithfully practiced all traditions. In *Thinking Through Paul*, authors Longenecker and Still write of Paul's "extraordinarily intimate knowledge of Scriptures," and a holistic education incorporating Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures and customs.² Paul attended synagogue, knew the Torah, and was a God-follower. Yet he persecuted the followers of Jesus.

I have met many women who were abused by husbands who professed to follow God. I heard an abuse survivor say that she prayed earnestly for her husband to have an experience like Paul did on the road to Damascus. And I will come back to her prayer request as we wrap up our time today. First, let's take a look at this section of Scripture. Turn with me to Acts 9 and I am reading from the New Revised Standard Version.

Meanwhile Saul, still **breathing threats** and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (vs 1-2)

Paul is "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord," and seeking to capture men and women "who belonged to the Way" (vs. 1-2). If you and I were part of that time and place, we knew of Paul and undoubtedly feared him. He had a reputation. Paul is on the road to Damascus with a hard heart and a mind filled with thoughts of violence against followers of Jesus. I'm reading into the text now, but believe that if we could see Paul in that moment, he had an air of superiority, pride, and arrogance. Do you agree? Have you

² Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd D. Still, *Thinking through Paul: An Introduction to His Life, Letters, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 24-26.



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encountered someone who knows Scripture inside and out, goes to church weekly, professes to be a follower of God, yet persecutes Christ-followers? Maybe, like me, you feel a conviction about times when you have done that too. Paul probably had thought that it was “his way or the highway.” Little did he know that this highway would change the state of his heart and change his life forever.

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (vs 3-5)

A light from heaven flashes and Paul hears a voice that no one else in his traveling party hears. In that very moment, Paul the God-follower is introduced to Jesus. In that very moment, Paul begins to see his actions in a new light, literally. Have you been taught in the past that Paul’s religion changed at this moment? Maybe you’ve heard that he ceased being a Jew and at this moment became a Christian? There is no reference to that, nor does it make sense. Paul remained a Jew, just as Jesus had and the majority of His disciples. But clearly in this moment, Paul recognized Jesus as Lord.

If you see some similarities between this section of Paul’s account and Jesus’ death and resurrection, then I think you are picking up on Paul’s intent. I think he is trying to describe his own spiritual death and resurrection experience. Let’s take a look.

Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (vs. 8-9)

For three days he did not eat or drink and could see nothing. He is entombed in darkness just as Jesus was entombed. Interesting pattern isn’t it? Regardless of the pattern,



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what is obvious to us is Paul cannot see and is in such a state of shock that he is unable to eat or drink. The same way God took Paul's sight, God could have restored it. Yet here we see God choose to use Ananias to heal Paul.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." (vs. 10-12)

Ananias is a follower of the Messiah. God chooses to send someone to Paul who can help him regain his sight and, I believe, that includes answering the 10 trillion questions Paul will raise. Putting yourselves in Paul's sandals, what does he have to deconstruct? What are some of the beliefs or traditions he now has to evaluate?

And what is Ananias experiencing in this passage? Have you ever felt like God was telling you to do something that you didn't want to do, and you tried talking Him out of it, only to continue feeling a powerful conviction to fulfill His request? That seems to be what is happening here. Ananias and God are having a bit of a disagreement on the proposed action plan.

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (vs 13-16)

Ananias goes to Paul, as God requests. Let's read what happens:

So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something



like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (vs 17-19)

What do you think of this imagery? “Something like scales fell from his eyes.” That is a powerful image and one I believe describes deconstruction. I think of Ananias sitting next to Paul, answering as many questions as Paul was asking. God empowered Ananias to help restore Paul’s spiritual eyesight. And that is exactly why your testimony matters. Your voice matters. Our deconstruction story is one of restored sight and it is a powerful testimony of God’s redemptive love.

Do you identify more with Paul, or with Ananias in this passage? Paul is the rule-follower who is certain that he is doing God’s will by persecuting men, women, and children who claim Christ as their Messiah. I know Christ-followers who have been persecuted by people who claim to follow God. I know people who, like Paul, deconstruct their judgmentalism and seek common ground with other believers – common ground in a belief in Jesus as the Messiah. I am one of those people. I truly believe that we can disagree on many things, but our faith and trust in Jesus Christ is all we need to stand on common ground.

Maybe you identify with Ananias, who does not want to talk to Paul because of his reputation and actions. I know I’ve had a couple of moments when I felt God was urging me to do something that I did not want to do. I guess those were Ananias moments in my life! I appreciate the fact that God did not punish Ananias for his internal unwillingness to minister to Paul.

Have any of you been hurt by the church, or a church leader? Maybe your faith has been judged inappropriate or insufficient. Maybe you have been alienated or excommunicated



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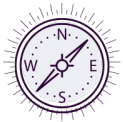
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because you haven't been good enough, followed the rules closely enough, or stepped out of your lane. Do you wish that those God-followers who judged you harshly would have an experience similar to Paul's?

But I see another side of the story too. I see myself in Paul's life and his experience on that road. I do not recall a time when I didn't know in my heart that I believed in God. I have always claimed Christianity as my faith, attended church regularly, read my Bible, attended small group studies, prayed and believed in God. But I also know that I have been judgmental of others. If someone did not fit into my idea of who a Christian should be, or how a Christian should live, or what a Christian should say, I believed in my heart they were not a Christian. I played God and thought I could see the state of their heart while completely disregarding the state of my own heart. In my zeal to be a rule-follower I undoubtedly have persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ through my words, actions, thoughts, and inaction. For that I am sorry.

Thankfully, God meets us on the road, just like Paul. We are so blessed to know that we have been blind to followers of Christ. Our hearts have been hard and judgmental toward others. And then, like Paul, we start to see more and more as each scale falls from our eyes. We see the difference between following rules and following Christ. We begin to see Christ in people we neglected to see Him in before. We see the need to take action against the persecution of others.

I want to go back to the woman who is a survivor of abuse, who prays for God to restore her abuser's sight like He restored Paul's. I am not surprised when survivors cling to this passage as a promise of God's restorative power. I want to tell her it is ok and right to pray for God to restore her abuser's sight. But I would add that while she is at it, she should give praise



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to God because He is removing scales from her eyes, allowing her to see her oppression and God's desire for her freedom and peace.

This concludes the Audio Message for Module 2: Sight and Light. My final thought is this. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by the darkness we see around us and forget that we would never see the darkness without God's illuminating presence in our lives.