

Podcast Companion

Week 3: Ananias, Saul & Barnabas | Featuring Tim Harlow

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Listen to this week's conversation with Tim Harlow before gathering. The episode expands Acts 9 through transformation, second chances, boundaries, mission, and the small steps of obedience God uses to change lives.

WHAT STOOD OUT?

- What statement, story, or idea from the podcast stayed with you? Why did it stand out?

BELIEVING PEOPLE CAN CHANGE

Tim noted how difficult it can be to believe someone has genuinely changed when we know their history or have experienced the damage they caused.

- Why does someone's past often feel more believable than the possibility of transformation?
- How can we remain open to what God may be doing without ignoring the reality of what someone has done?

FORGIVENESS, TRUST & BOUNDARIES

"Forgiveness doesn't mean acceptance. Forgiveness doesn't mean I have to give someone the power to hurt me again."

- Why is it important to distinguish forgiveness, reconciliation, and restored trust?
- How can healthy boundaries allow grace without ignoring safety, wisdom, or accountability?

LIVING ON MISSION IS UNCOMFORTABLE

"Mission is uncomfortable."

Jesus consistently moved toward people and places others avoided. Ananias walked toward someone he feared, and Barnabas risked his reputation to help Saul find acceptance.

- Why do we often expect following Jesus to feel safe and comfortable?
- Where might comfort be keeping Christians from moving toward someone who needs the love of Jesus?

MAKING ROOM FOR PEOPLE

Churches and Christians can unintentionally create barriers through language, expectations, attitudes, and assumptions.

- What subtle behaviors can make outsiders feel as though they do not belong?
- What simple actions help someone feel seen, welcomed, and valued?
- How can we become more aware of people who feel uncertain, uncomfortable, or out of place?

CONVERSATION LENS

A past and a future can both be true.

Grace does not require pretending harm never happened. It asks us to leave room for God to write a new chapter while practicing wisdom in the present.

SMALL STEPS OF OBEDIENCE

Shane shared how several people took small steps to help a student attend CIY, where he eventually surrendered his life to Jesus and was baptized. None of them could see the ending when they took their step.

- Why do we underestimate the spiritual impact of ordinary generosity, invitation, encouragement, or service?
- What small step of obedience from someone else made a meaningful difference in your life?

LETTING GO OF THE RESULTS

"You have to let go of the results."

We are responsible for obedience, but God is responsible for what happens next.

- Why is it difficult to invest when there is no guarantee someone will respond, change, or appreciate what we do?
- How can focusing on the "next right thing" free us from trying to control another person's story?
- What changes when we measure faithfulness by obedience instead of immediate results?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A person's past does not place them beyond God's reach.
- Forgiveness can coexist with wisdom, accountability, and boundaries.
- Living on mission regularly moves us outside our comfort zones.
- Small acts of obedience can become part of a much larger story.
- Our responsibility is the next faithful step; God holds the results.
- The church should welcome people before they have everything figured out.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Think about someone you may have defined by their past, avoided because they make you uncomfortable, or hesitated to invest in because you cannot predict the outcome.

- What is one faithful step God may be asking you to take toward that person?

Your next step could be:

- Starting a conversation
- Offering encouragement
- Extending an invitation
- Providing practical help
- Giving someone room to grow
- Welcoming someone others overlook
- Setting a healthy boundary while still choosing grace

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

"So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, 'Brother Saul...'"

ACTS 9:17 · NLT

Ananias knew Saul's reputation, but he chose to respond to what God said Saul could become.

- Where might God be asking you to see someone through the lens of grace rather than only through the lens of their past?