

September 6, 2020

Seeing Jesus

Acts 9:1-20

On September 4, Disney released the much-anticipated live-action version of *Mulan*. The original animated version of the movie was released in 1998. In both versions, Fa Mulan, a young girl, takes the place of her father when he is called to serve in the Chinese military. The story is set in the fifteenth century, when women were not allowed to serve in the armed forces. Through trials, tribulations, and Disney magic, Mulan becomes a hero.

The live-action version of *Mulan* leaves out a few unique characters featured in the animated movie. One of those characters is Mushu the dragon, who is tasked with helping Mulan. Mushu is not a stereotypical helper. Unlike a dragon you'd imagine as a protector (a giant, fiery thing), Mushu is small, about the size of a dachshund. He also does not have good intentions in the beginning of the movie. He only helps Mulan in order to earn back a position of esteem he had lost. As the story continues, though, he becomes a sidekick and a friend to our hero for all the right reasons. Mulan, in turn, becomes the stuff of legend.

The focal passage for this week's lesson focuses on Saul's conversion, but let's not overlook the champion that was Ananias. He knew that Saul was a dastardly anti-Christian brute. He must have been terrified that Saul would "spew out murderous threats" (Acts 9:1) or even take him prisoner. But God told Ananias to go to this evil man and restore his sight when doing so might have caused Saul to harm Ananias, and Ananias did as God commanded. He went to Saul to restore his sight, and he even called him brother. He put aside all the prejudice and preconceptions he had about this man and did as God commanded. As a result, the gospel of Jesus Christ gained one of its most prolific advocates ever.

The student book author writes, "Ananias served as one of God's instruments to lead Saul to what he became. . . . Ananias ministered to Saul's physical and spiritual needs."¹ Ananias had no way of knowing that Saul would become the great missionary he became, but Ananias helped him. He had no way of knowing that his act of faith would be the catalyst for Saul's conversion, but he ministered to him. Ananias trusted God. He knew the dangers that lay ahead if Saul decided to return to his old ways once healed, and he went anyway because God told him to. What if we all were so brave?

1. What traits in others make you resistant to help them? How can you overcome these prejudices?
2. How has your anger or the anger of others stopped you from helping someone?
3. What has God led you to do that you were reluctant to do?

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¹From *Adult Bible Studies*, Fall 2020, by Chuck Aaron (Cokesbury, 2020); page 11.