

LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Acts 9:1-19

Galatians 1:11-16a

Session Theme:

Transformation

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Agent of Change

Gather a small container of vinegar, a box of baking soda, a tall, clear cup, and a tray or rimmed baking sheet. Pour several tablespoons of baking soda into the cup and place it on the tray. Ask kids how they could make this powder change and grow taller. Listen to all suggestions. Then, bring out the vinegar and pour some into the cup; watch the baking soda foam up. Explain that sometimes, change happens because an outside agent enters the situation. In this case, it's vinegar. In today's Bible story, it was something much more powerful than that!

Did you expect the vinegar to affect the baking soda like that? That was a little surprise, but in today's story, a much bigger transformation occurred. What happened? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, you are the one who is able to transform hearts and minds. Be with us today, and always, and make us into the people you want us to be. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- *"Here I Am, Lord" (hymn)*
- *"Amazing Grace" (hymn)*

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Understanding

God used the apostles to bring the message of Jesus to many people across the ancient world. The Holy Spirit created faith through the power of God's Word, and people's lives were changed. The early Church continued to grow.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help students think about details of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

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Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Acts 9:1-19

1. By what name or descriptor are the disciples of the Lord referred to in verse 2? Where do you think this name comes from? (For a hint, see John 14:6.)

   Verse 2 refers to Christian believers as "those who belong to the Way." This shows us that faith in Jesus is not just an idea in our heads; faith is a way of life. Jesus referred to himself as "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Saying "we belong to the Way" or "we follow the Way" is a reference to Jesus himself.

2. How did Saul feel about Christians? Knowing that he was a very religious person, why do you think he felt this way? What was he missing?

   Saul hated Christians, and he was planning to tie them up and bring them to Jerusalem, where they would be put on trial. He felt it was his duty to shut down the Christian faith.

   He was a religious person, but he didn't trust and believe in Jesus. Faith is more than just following a list of rules or religious laws. It is a relationship with a real, living Savior and Lord — Jesus himself! That's what Saul did not have.

3. Describe what happened to Saul as he traveled along the road to Damascus. How do you think he felt as all this was happening? What do you think he felt like immediately *after* this encounter?

   A bright light from heaven suddenly shone around him. Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice ask him, "Why are you persecuting me?" At that same time, he was struck blind.

   It is not hard to imagine that he must have felt surprised, as well as scared and confused. But as the reality of this encounter set in, he may have begun to feel guilty and sad, knowing he had been wrong. He was probably also anxious and fearful about what would happen next.

4. Reread what Jesus said to Saul in verses 4-5. In what sense was Saul persecuting Jesus himself? How does this match what Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46?

   Jesus said to Saul, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." But Saul had never met Jesus himself; he had been persecuting the followers of Jesus. Yet, as Jesus once told his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). After confronting him, Jesus told Saul to get up and go into the city of Damascus. Once there, he would be told what to do next.

5. How did Ananias feel about meeting Saul? Why? Why do you think he obeyed the Lord's instructions anyway? What would you have been thinking if you had been in Ananias' shoes?

   Ananias was afraid because he knew of Saul's terrible deeds against the Christians. Saul was already well known as dangerous, someone to stay away from. Nonetheless, Ananias trusted in God. So Ananias went to find Saul, just as he had been commanded.

   It is easy to get overwhelmed by our fears or to take the easy way out, rather than doing what God asks of us. But God gives us the strength and courage to trust in him, even when things get tough.

6. In verses 15-16, what two things did the Lord foretell would happen to Saul? In what way do these things usually go together? Have you found that to be true in your own life?

   Jesus said of Saul: "He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." Jesus also said, "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." It is not always easy to be a follower of Jesus; we will face rejection and sometimes even persecution. But because God is with us in our life, we have the strength and courage to trust in him.

7. How did Saul's life change after all this happened to him? In what way(s) has having faith changed your life or made you a different person?

   Ananias prayed over Saul and asked that the Holy Spirit fill him. Scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see! After being baptized, Saul began preaching about Jesus. A new man, Saul preached faithfully for the rest of his life. Never again did he persecute the Christians — he was one of them! Faith in Christ gives people new purpose, changing their lives for the better.

8. Read Galatians 1:11-16a. Why do you think Paul emphasized that he did not come to faith in Christ on his own? How is that true of all of us?

   As we have seen with the other Apostles, Paul wanted people to know that he was not saved by his own reason or strength, but entirely by the grace of God in Christ. By his very life, Paul wanted to point others to faith in Jesus.

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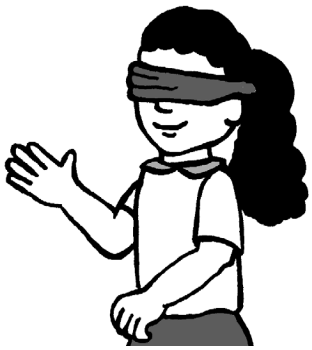
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: "Catch Me if You Can" Game

Materials Needed:



- Blindfold
- Small Bible
- Large open area to play a game, inside or outdoors
- Masking tape, rope or cones to make starting/finishing lines

Instructions:

Mark off a starting line and a finishing line. Have the class stand behind the starting line. These are the Christians. Choose one volunteer to be blindfolded; that person will be Saul. Saul will sit on the ground in the middle of the floor, blindfolded, facing the line of Christians. Place the small Bible about three feet in front of Saul.

The Christians can begin talking quietly to distract Saul. When you (silently) point at a student in line, he or she will try to retrieve the object in front of Saul without being noticed. Once the item has been picked up, that student will try to tiptoe across the finish line with it. If Saul hears and points directly at the person, that student is caught and must return to the starting line. If not, and the student succeeds, he or she will become the next Saul and the original Saul will join the others for another round.

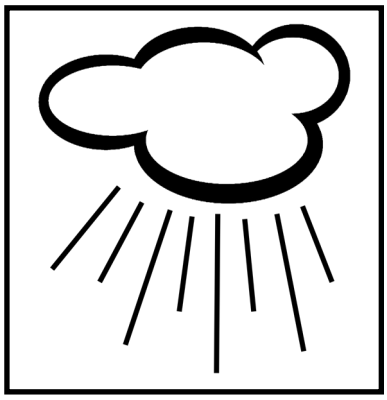
If Saul is quite good at catching people, or if the group is clever enough to make a lot of noise to prevent him from catching them, make this more challenging by silencing the Christians and pointing at two or more students at a time. Saul will need to listen intently and point only at the person with the object. This will continue until someone succeeds and the round ends, or until all students have unsuccessfully had a turn and Saul is declared the winner.

In today's story, Saul began by catching Christians and persecuting them. But God stopped that, even blinding Saul for a time to get his attention. Later, Saul changed his name to Paul and became a great Christian leader!

God can use anyone, even those who least expect it and seem least likely, for his good purposes. Who could have dreamed that someone like Saul would do so much good? It is never too late for God to intervene and change someone.

Activity 2: Paul's Vision Picture

Materials Needed:



- Glow-in-the-dark paint
- Card stock or heavy paper
- Pencils
- Paper plates
- Paper cups
- Paintbrushes
- Paper towels

Instructions:

Fill paper cups with water, and give each person a cup, paintbrush, paper plate, pencil and piece of card stock or construction paper.

Invite kids to draw what they imagined Saul saw when he heard Christ speak to him along the road to Damascus. The Bible tells us that a bright light shone around Saul, but those traveling with him heard the voice and didn't see anything.

What might Saul have seen in that light? Jesus looking down at him? The rays of a rainbow? A mesmerizing swirl of color? Have kids use their imaginations, and then draw what they think Paul saw.



When kids have sketched out their pictures lightly in pencil, have them paint over that with paint brushes, using the glow-in-the-dark paint. Make sure kids use enough paint so it will be visible later in the dark.

Let the pictures dry. Most glow-in-the-dark paints will have you expose the picture to bright light, and then turn off the light to see it glowing in the dark.

Follow the directions on your particular paints, then shut off the classroom light (or draw the shades) so kids can see their images glowing in the semi-darkness.

Saul was determined to do things his way. God put a halt to that by breaking the rules of the natural world and speaking directly to him. The others on the road heard the voice — it wasn't just something in Saul's mind. How might you have felt and reacted if you were on the journey with him?

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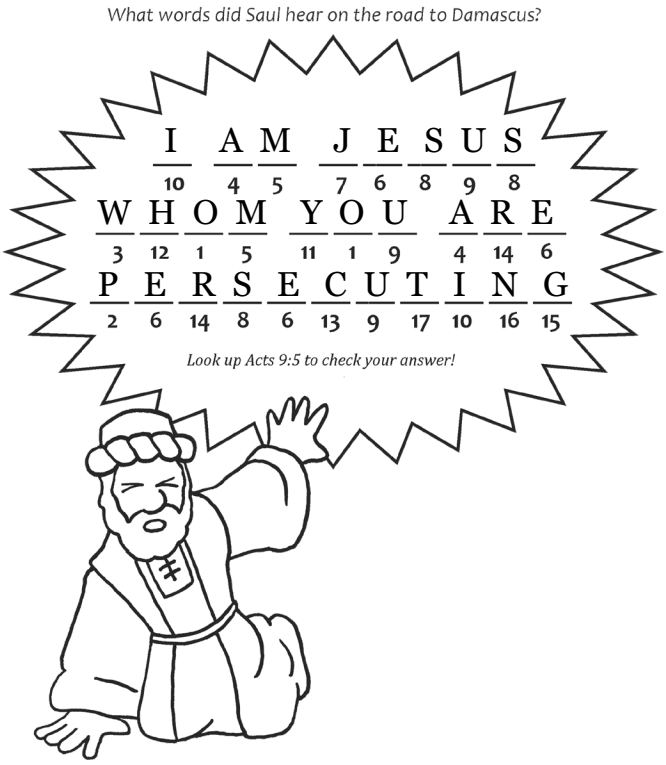
Worksheet Answer Key

Below are the answers to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:



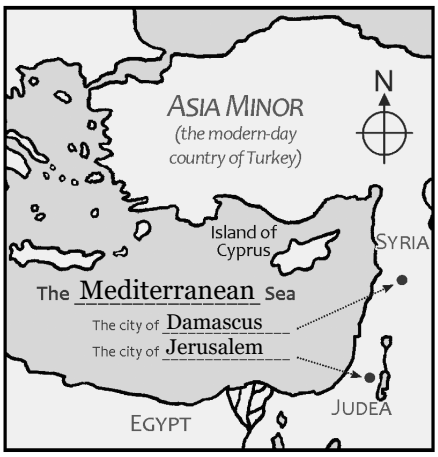
The risen Jesus spoke to Paul on the road:
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
(Acts 9:5)

Later: Saul changed his name to Paul.

Map Answer Key

Traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, Paul would have headed NORTH.

Damascus was (and still is) in the region of SYRIA.



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Transformation

a complete change

When Jesus spoke to Saul directly, Saul had a real transformation. Not only was his name changed to Paul, but he started to help Christians rather than hurt them.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Have you ever wished to hear a message directly from Jesus? Saul actually had that happen to him, and it changed his life! In fact, it made such an impact on him that afterwards he became known by a different name: Paul.



How does the symbol of the butterfly (right) illustrate the idea of a complete transformation?

God can transform people, even those who seem the most unchangeable and determined to do things their own way. No one is hopeless. No one is beyond God's reach. Paul's story reminds us of that important fact.

Talk to one another about these questions:

What are some of the ways that God gets people's attention today? How does God change us?

What can you do if someone you care about seems to have no interest in Jesus, or is even an adamant unbeliever?

Do you think that God might sometimes use unusual methods, and even our challenges and weaknesses, to draw us closer to him? Why or why not?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer giving thanks to God for Jesus Christ and for faithful teachers and preachers who have passed on the Good News even when their lives were in danger. Pray for the persecuted church.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.

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