

Paul's Conversion and Baptism

1

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 9:1-25

MAIN POINT: Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.

KEY PASSAGE: Acts 1:8

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10-15 MINUTES)
PAGE 126



TEACH THE STORY
(25-30 MINUTES)
PAGE 128



APPLY THE STORY
(25-30 MINUTES)
PAGE 134



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Saul was no stranger to religion. He grew up in a religious household. He was a devout Jew who was born in Tarsus (Phil. 3:5) and inherited his Roman citizenship from his father. So when people began talking about this man named Jesus and claiming that He was the promised Messiah, Saul was defensive.

Saul believed strongly in the Jewish faith of his ancestors. He violently persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. (Gal. 1:13-14) He dragged believers from their houses and put them in prison. He approved of the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Saul thought he was doing the right thing by defending Judaism, but God's purposes could

not be stopped. As Saul was on his way to arrest believers in Damascus, the Lord stopped him in his tracks.

Jesus revealed Himself to Saul, and Saul was never the same. He was struck blind and led into Damascus, where a believer named Ananias placed his hands on Saul. Suddenly, Saul could see again. Saul was convinced that Jesus is Lord. Saul later described the experience as being like dying and receiving a new life. (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:17)

God had a purpose and a plan for Saul. He had set Saul apart before Saul was even born. (Gal. 1:15) God said, “This man is My chosen instrument to take My name to the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15).

Jesus changed Saul’s life. As you teach kids, clarify that conversion happens when a person recognizes his sin, repents, believes in Jesus, and confesses Jesus as Savior and Lord. Jesus changes a person’s heart, and as a result, his life is changed too.

Jesus appeared to Saul and changed him inside and out. Jesus called Saul, who was once an enemy of Christians, to spend the rest of his life telling people the gospel and leading them to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Paul's Conversion and Baptism

Acts 9:1-25

• Utilize posture:

Bend or crouch when Saul fell to the ground. Then reach out your hands when Ananias touched Saul.

After Jesus died, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus were persecuted, or treated cruelly because of their faith. One of Jesus' followers, Stephen, was even killed. A man named Saul had been there when Stephen was killed. **Saul wanted to put an end to the church. He went into the believers' homes, dragged them out, and put them into jail. Many believers fled the city.**

Saul headed to Damascus (duh MASS kuhs) to arrest believers there, but on the way, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

"Who are You, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus," He replied. "Get up and go into the city. Then you will be told what you must do."

Saul got up and opened his eyes, but he couldn't see! So the men who were traveling with Saul led him by the hand into Damascus.

Ananias (an uh NIGH uhs), a disciple of Jesus, lived in Damascus. The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision. He told him to go to the house where Saul was staying. Ananias knew that Saul had hurt many believers in Jerusalem and that he arrested anyone who believed in Jesus. But the Lord said, "Go! I have chosen this man to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites."

Ananias obeyed the Lord. He found Saul and told Saul that Jesus had sent him to help. Ananias put his hands on Saul, and suddenly Saul could see again. Saul got up and

was baptized.

For the next few days, Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus. He began to go to the synagogues to preach about Jesus. Saul told the people, “Jesus is the Son of God!”

The people were amazed. They recognized Saul and knew he had wanted to put an end to the church and all the believers. Now he was one of them! The Jews did not like Saul’s message, so they planned to kill him. Saul heard what the Jews wanted to do, so one night he left the city. The disciples helped Saul escape by lowering him down the city wall in a basket.

Christ Connection: Jesus appeared to Saul and changed him inside and out. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus called Saul, also known as Paul, who was once an enemy to Christians, to spend the rest of his life telling people the gospel and leading them to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Introduce the STORY

SESSION TITLE: Paul's Conversion and Baptism

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to help new kids connect to your group. As kids arrive ask them about a time they changed their mind about something. Did they learn to like a new kind of food? Did their favorite movie get replaced by a newer movie?

SAY • It's not unusual for us to change our opinions on things. Sometimes our tastes in movies and music change, and sometimes we learn new facts that change how we feel about situations. In today's story, we will learn about a man whose opinion of Jesus changed. How do you think that happened?

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Road to Damascus" activity page. Kids will complete the maze to lead Paul to Damascus.

SAY • In our story today, we will learn about a man who hated Jesus and the people who believed in Him. This man planned to hurt Christians in a city called Damascus, but God had a better plan for him.

- "Road to Damascus" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Blind catch

Instruct the kids to line up side by side along a wall. Stand at the opposite wall and toss table tennis balls to the kids. See how many of the balls they are able to catch. Then, blindfold the kids and repeat the process. See how many balls they are able to catch this time.

SAY • Losing your sight would make many parts of life difficult. In our story today, we will learn about a time God blinded a man who hated Jesus. What do you think God had planned for this man?



- table tennis balls
- blindfolds

Tip: be sensitive to kids with visual impairments.

Transition to teach the story

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Paul was an apostle, which means God selected him for a special purpose to spread the news about Jesus. In fact, that leads me to our big picture question. *How do people hear about Jesus?* Say it with me this time: *How do people hear about Jesus?* Great job! We will be learning the answer very soon, so pay attention!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

LEADER • Remember that after Jesus went back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to help people obey Him. That was the start of the church, and boy did it grow fast. The Holy Spirit gave Christians power to obey Jesus and spread the gospel. However, some people wanted to stop Christians from talking about Jesus. They arrested, hurt, and sometimes killed Christians. One man who hated Christians was named Saul. Saul was a Roman Jew, so he also had a Roman name, Paul. Yep, The same Paul. We will hear today about “Paul’s Conversion and Baptism.”

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

- Bibles
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 9:1-25. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story.

LEADER • Isn't it great the way God works? Saul, also known as Paul, was an enemy of the church. He hated people who followed Jesus and wanted to do them harm. He was even present when Stephen was killed. The Bible tells us that Paul approved of Stephen's killing. (Acts 8:1) Only our all-good and all-powerful God could change Paul. And that's what happened!

After Jesus stopped Paul on the road, Paul was blind and basically helpless! But God's plan was working in Paul's life. God sent a man named Ananias to restore Paul's sight and pray for him. In fact, that helps us answer the big picture question.

How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.

When Paul's vision came back, he was seeing things even more clearly than before. He finally understood that Jesus really is the Messiah! When God changes a person's heart to go from unbelief to belief in Jesus, we call it conversion. *Conversion* means "change." And let me tell you, Paul was definitely changed! When we become Christians, everything about us is changed by God.

Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel. From that day on, Paul became known for his bold preaching and desire to spread

the news about Jesus. Paul even went on to write about half of the New Testament!

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus appeared to Saul and changed him inside and out. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus called Saul, also known as Paul, who was once an enemy to Christians, to spend the rest of his life telling people the gospel and leading them to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Acts 1:8.

• Key Passage Poster

LEADER • This key passage is from the Book of Acts. Acts was written by Luke, who also wrote the Gospel of Luke. Luke collected information from eye-witnesses and occasionally traveled with early missionaries. We call it the Book of Acts because the whole thing is about the *acts* or actions of the Holy Spirit working through the apostles and early Christians.

In this key passage, we remember what Jesus told His disciples before ascending to heaven. He told them they would go all over the world with the gospel, and that's exactly what we see happen!

Lead boys and girls in singing “The End of the Earth.”

Discussion starter (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever seen something that you thought was completely useless? How do you respond when something seems like garbage?

LEADER • Most of the Christians in the early church

probably thought Saul was beyond saving. He was too evil and hated Jesus too much, they may have thought. But Jesus showed His great power to save anyone by changing Paul's life completely. He went from wanting to hurt the church, to helping the church grow!

Jesus can save anyone. There is no one who is too far away from Jesus to be rescued by Him. We can share the gospel boldly with anyone because we know that God is able to save even people that we think could never believe in Jesus.

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You for saving us even when we, like Paul, were Your enemies. Help us to trust in You and boldly share the gospel with everyone. Fill us with Your power by the Holy Spirit so we can live on mission for You. Amen

Dismiss to apply the story

Apply the STORY

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Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage
Poster

Work with your group to learn hand motions that will help the kids remember the key passage. You may use the suggested motions below, or adapt them to fit better with your preferred Bible translation. Say the verse multiple times with the motions, and then sing “To the End of the Earth.”

Suggested motions:

- **You will receive power** [*Flex arms.*]
 - **when the Holy Spirit** [*Point upward.*]
 - **comes on you** [*Move hands down to touch your heart.*]
 - **and you will be my witnesses** [*Hold up four fingers in front of your lips.*]
 - **In Jerusalem** [*Use your hands to make a small circle in front of you with your hands.*]
 - **in all Judea and Samaria** [*Make a larger circle with your arms.*]
 - **and to the ends of the earth** [*Spread arms out wide.*]
- SAY** • This key passage comes from the Book of Acts. It is the last thing Jesus said to His disciples before ascending into heaven. Jesus told His followers that the Holy Spirit would come to them and lead them

out into the world to share the gospel with people all over the world! The disciples would start close to their homes, in Jerusalem, and work their way outward to Judea, Samaria, and the whole earth!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Use a large sheet of paper or a white board to draw two circles that slightly overlap in the middle. Then distribute a Bible to each kid and help the kids find Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9:19-22. Read the verses together, and then invite the kids to discuss words that could describe Saul before meeting Jesus, after meeting Jesus, and things that were true about Saul in both cases. Write their ideas in the different sections of the circle to form a Venn diagram.

Suggestions:

- Saul before Jesus: cruel, violent, approved of killing Christians, hated Jesus, wanted to hurt Christians
- Saul in both cases: Loved by God, Jewish, a sinner
- Saul after Jesus: compassionate, loved Jesus, wanted to help Christians, dedicated to sharing the gospel

SAY • Jesus saved Saul from his sin and chose him to spread the gospel. Saul was not just an unbeliever, he was actively trying to hurt the church and keep people from believing in Jesus. Saul wanted to arrest and even kill people who trusted Jesus and preached about him. Despite all that, Jesus still changed his heart! Saul, also known as Paul, became one of the most effective missionaries and even ended up writing many of the letters that became books in the New Testament. Paul's life was headed in one direction away from God, but God changed that direction and used Paul to spread the gospel.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- large sheet of paper or dry erase board
- marker

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

Tip: Only allow kids to run in the round where all eyes are open. Ensure kids do not run when eyes are closed.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Blind tag

Play two rounds of tag. In the first round, select one kid to be *It* and instruct her to walk around tagging other kids. The other kids must keep their eyes closed. Each time a kid is tagged, that kid becomes *It* and may open his eyes, while the kid who tagged him must close her eyes and becomes part of the group trying to avoid being tagged. Play a second round where all kids are allowed to keep their eyes open.

SAY • In our story, Jesus blinded Paul when He spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus. However, it was actually this event that opened Paul's eyes to see the truth that Jesus is Lord and Savior. **Jesus saved Saul from his sin and chose him to spread the gospel.** Paul went from wanting to stop the church from growing, to being one of the main people helping it grow. When we trust in Jesus for salvation, He can use us to grow the church too.

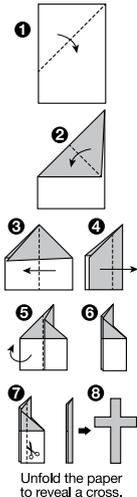
OPTION 2: A hidden cross

Teach the kids the following craft to give them a fun way to share the gospel with their friends. Distribute a piece of paper to each kid and help the kids follow the steps. Check the margin art for a visual aid.

Instructions:

1. Lay the paper flat on a table so that it is in portrait orientation, with the long sides on the left and right.
2. Fold the top left corner down until the short side at the top aligns with the right side of the paper.
3. Fold the top point down so that the right side lines up with the edge that was folded down in step 1.

• paper



4. Fold the house shape in half along the vertical centerline.
5. Fold the flaps on both sides of the center line back over to make an airplane-like shape.
6. Cut a straight line up as though removing the wings and base of the airplane, leaving just the folded spine of the craft.
7. Unfold the craft to reveal a cross.

SAY • You can use this craft to tell people about Jesus.

Explain to them that sometimes Jesus seems hidden from us, and we cannot see His plans. But when we trust in Him, and in His death and resurrection, our life unfolds to show His mark on our life.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure each child secures this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- Journal Page
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.