

LESSON 8



SAUL IS CONVERTED

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Saul

Saul was born in Tarsus into a strict Pharisee family. In addition to being a Roman citizen (which was a great privilege during that time), he was also of high standing in Jewish circles. He was educated by Gamaliel, one of the most honored Jewish teachers of the time (Act 5:34). He had dedicated the first part of his life to persecuting Christians because he truly thought that it was a heretic belief. He was on close terms with the Jewish high priest, who granted him what he needed for his work in persecuting Christians. But after Jesus opened Saul's eyes to the truth, he became a great apostle to the Gentiles. After his conversion, Saul (now called Paul) traveled as a tireless teacher to many major cities throughout the Roman Empire. Beginning in Antioch, he launched three extensive missionary trips that sowed the seed for churches throughout Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy.

Damascus

Damascus, a city located in the Roman province of Syria about 175 miles northeast of Jerusalem, had a large Jewish population and was a key commercial city. Several trade routes linked Damascus to other cities throughout the Roman Empire. Saul was afraid that if Christianity flourished in Damascus, it would quickly spread to other places. He wanted to prevent Christianity from expanding any further, so he asked the high priest for permission to imprison any Christians that he found in Damascus.

Early Christianity

During the time that Saul was persecuting Christians, the believers were also known as followers of the Way (Acts 9:2) since the word "Christians" was fairly new and not used by everyone. At this time, the followers of Jesus were all converted Jews. They formed a closely-knit community filled with love and fellowship that was blessed by God despite the persecution that people like Saul inflicted. The persecution actually caused them to scatter throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), leading to the spreading of the gospel to these regions. Wherever these early Christians went, they were able to preach the gospel through their speech and their actions.

BIBLE TEXT

Acts 9:1-22

BIBLE TRUTH

Saul was converted by Jesus and dedicated himself to God's work.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To become witnesses for God by living a Christian life.

MEMORY VERSE

"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

(Acts 1:8b)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus, we pray. Lord Jesus, thank You for taking care of us every day. We know that it is impossible to repay Your kindness and love. But You have given us the Holy Spirit to help us be witnesses for You. Please help us be strong so that we can testify to our friends and neighbors about You and give all glory to Your name. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Paul led a true Christian life. Once he was converted, he became a changed man, living and breathing every minute for Christ. He constantly praised God and helped others, edifying all who heard or saw him. Of course, Paul's shoes are hard to fill and your students certainly are not prepared to do God's work with that kind of power. However, they need to understand that being a Christian means more than just having that title. While they will not be able to preach like Paul, their lives should at least be a living testament of God's love and grace. Because they believe in Jesus, their actions and words should reflect the presence of Jesus in their lives. Otherwise, they are no different than

others who do not believe in the true God. More importantly, do they lead a different life outside of church? They may be model citizens during Sabbath, but what about when they go to school or the time they spend at home? Do they still behave the way that a good Christian follower should? It is vital for your students to understand that being a Christian is not a weekend role. Like Paul, it should be a part of everything that they do or say. Discuss what being a Christian means to them. Lastly, encourage them to pray to God so that their Christian beliefs will truly change their lives. Then they will be a living testimony of God's love.

VOCABULARY

converted: changed, transformed

persecute: to harass, torture, oppress, and sometimes even kill, often because of one's beliefs

synagogue: Jewish temple, church, or place of worship

high priest: the leader of the Jewish religion

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about how Peter was rescued from prison. King Herod had imprisoned Peter to please the Jewish leaders. The believers prayed very hard for Peter's safety. The night before Peter was about to be killed, an angel of God appeared in the prison cell and guided him safely out. Not one of the soldiers guarding him knew what had happened. When Peter was led past the gates, the angel disappeared. Only then did Peter realize what had happened. Quickly, he went to the house where the believers had gathered to pray for him. When they saw him, they were happy and they praised God for His love and protection. After telling everyone the miraculous story, Peter left Jerusalem to preach to others about Jesus' love. We learned that we should pray with faith like the believers and trust in God's protection.

BIBLE STORY

Saul's Persecution of Jesus' Followers

When Christianity first started, the Christians were very joyful. They lived like one big family and many Jews converted to join them. At the same time, many Jewish leaders were persecuting Jesus' followers. They were jealous because the Christians were growing in number quickly since so many Jews wanted to join them. The Jewish leaders like the high priest and his people even convinced the kings who ruled over Jerusalem to arrest and kill the leaders of the church. So, you can see that there were many people who did not like the Christians at all. What do you think the Christians did when so many people were trying to lock them in prison and kill them? They left!

The believers scattered and went to live in different

cities. [It may help to show the students a map of Judea and Samaria so that they can see where the early Christians scattered to.] But even then, there was one person who didn't give up looking for Christians and capturing them. He wanted to arrest all the followers of Jesus and put them into jail. This man's name was Saul. He was a very smart man who had studied the Old Testament for many years. He knew all about Jesus, but he didn't believe that Jesus was the Savior of mankind that the Old Testament was talking about. So he decided to spend his life getting rid of Jesus' followers. Saul was very close to the leaders of the Jews, and they were very happy that Saul was working so hard to put the Christians into jail. He was willing to travel anywhere to arrest Christians.

One day, Saul heard that Christians were preaching

and teaching about Jesus in a city called Damascus. Saul also heard that many people there believed and were getting baptized. He immediately went to the Jewish leaders and asked them for permission to go and find these people so that he could arrest them. The Jewish leaders were very happy to allow Saul to go.

The Lord Appears to Saul

Saul gathered some men to go with him and they started out toward Damascus. As they came near to the city, an amazing thing happened. As they were walking, a blaze of light brighter than the sun suddenly shone from heaven on Saul. Saul fell to the ground immediately, surprised and frightened. He had never seen anything like this before. Then a voice called out.

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” it said.

Saul was confused. “Who are You, Lord?” he asked.

“I am Jesus,” the voice answered back, “whom you are persecuting.”

When Saul heard this, he became amazed. Could it be true that Jesus was really God? Whose voice could it be but Jesus’ since it was coming from heaven?

Then Saul asked, “What do You want me to do now?”

The voice replied, “Get up and go into the city. When you get there, you will be told what to do.” After these words, the bright light disappeared.

The other men were very afraid. They had heard the voice but hadn’t seen anyone. Jesus had only appeared to Saul so they didn’t know what was happening. Saul slowly rose from the ground. He was still shaking from the experience, but he became even more scared when he realized that he couldn’t see anything. At first, he thought it was because of the bright flash of light, but now it was gone, and he only saw complete darkness. The men who were with him took his hand and helped him walk to Damascus.

Saul Begins to Change

After arriving in the city, Saul stayed in a house to wait for further instruction from Jesus. What do you think he did during those days? What would you have done? Saul just prayed and thought about what had happened to him. He didn’t eat or drink anything for three days and nights. He realized that Jesus was God because only God had such power. Can you imagine how much his life had been changed by this? Everything that he had worked so hard for before was all wrong! Inside, Saul felt like a new person. Even though he was blind, he didn’t want to harm Jesus’ followers anymore. In fact, he felt really bad about arresting the believers. So he waited patiently for God to tell him what to do next.

God Calls Ananias

In the meantime, the Lord appeared in a vision to another man who also lived in Damascus. His name was Ananias, and he was a faithful worker for God. God wanted

Ananias to help Saul become a new person.

In a vision, God called to him, saying, “Ananias.”

“Yes Lord, here I am,” Ananias answered.

“Get up and go to Straight Street, and at the house belonging to Judas, you will find Saul of Tarsus,” said the Lord. “He is praying to Me now. I have told him in his prayers that you will help him get his sight back.”

When Ananias heard this command, he was amazed. He knew about all the terrible things Saul had done to the believers of Jesus. Why would God want to help him?

So Ananias said, “Lord, I have heard how this man hates Your followers. I also know that he wants to arrest everyone who believes in You.”

But God answered, “Don’t worry. Do as I tell you. I have chosen Saul to carry My name to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the Jews. I will show him how much he will have to suffer for Me.”

After hearing this, Ananias knew that God had a special plan for Saul, so he obeyed God and went as God instructed.

Saul Regains His Sight

Do you think that Ananias was still scared when he arrived at the house where Saul was? Probably! But even though he was scared, he still did what God told him to do. When Ananias found him, Saul was blind, weak, and powerless. Ananias laid his hands on Saul and said to him, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who spoke to you on the road, sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

As soon as Ananias spoke those words, scale-like objects fell from Saul’s eyes and he could see again. He praised God and wanted to get baptized. After the baptism, he returned to the house and ate some food to gain strength again. He decided to stay with the Christian believers for a few days to learn all that he could about Jesus. On the Sabbath, Saul went to the synagogue and began to preach about Jesus. He started to obey the Lord right away, telling everyone he now believed that Jesus was the Son of God. He was very excited that Jesus had given him a chance to repent. Now he was going to spend his energy preaching the good news to others.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

This Bible story is suitable to turn into a storyboard activity or skit as a means to reinforce the story. Have your students create storyboards or have them act out the story to you. If you don't think there is enough time, you can pre-draw a storyboard, then cut out the pictures and have them place the pictures in the correct order. When they finish, they should be able to tell the story back to you. Alternatively, you can write out a script for them to act out the events. In this case, try to involve all the students.

After the storyboard activity or skit, discuss the following questions:

1. Why do you think Saul changed so suddenly and believed in Jesus?
2. How did Saul show that he was a new person?
3. How can you show that you are a Christian to others?

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.

You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

**"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
(Acts 1:8b)**

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. Saul, Damascus
2. light
3. three
4. False; Saul completely changed and started preaching that Jesus was the Son of God.
5. True
6. Saul went around preaching that Jesus was the Son of God.
7. Answers may vary.
8. Answers may vary.
9. Answers may vary.

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

We should live a life that reflects the life of Christ.

1. Identify the change in Saul's life

- Cut out the following words describing Saul's life.
- Have the students group the words into before and after his conversion.

Before	After
Hated Christians	Believed in Jesus
Cruel, mean	Loved Jesus
Persecuted Christians	Loved Jesus' followers
Had no love	Preached the gospel
Did not know Jesus	Was willing to die for Jesus

From looking at the way that Saul behaved before and after his conversion, we can see that his life really changed. It is only through the changes in a person's behavior that others can see if someone has changed. If Saul started to believe in Jesus but didn't share his new beliefs or stop persecuting the Christians, then that would mean that he didn't actually believe in Jesus.

2. Identify things we need to change in our lives

In the same way that others could tell that Saul converted to Christianity, others should be able to tell from the way we behave and from our words that we are followers of Jesus.

Read the sentences below aloud to your students and have them identify the things in which they are lacking.

1. I always like to go to church.
2. I want to pray for the Holy Spirit.
3. I like to work hard in school.
4. I want to show love and kindness to everyone.
5. I need to stop complaining.
6. I need to stop telling lies.
7. I need to obey my parents.
8. I need to tell others about Jesus' love.
9. I need to finish what I start.
10. I need to clean my room.

For the ones that they identified, discuss ways that they can do them or do them better. Emphasize relying on God and prayer to help them do these. Draw from your own experiences of how you changed or overcame a problem or weakness. Also, emphasize that they should be Christian-like not only at church, but also at school and at home—they should be Christian-like everywhere.

ACTIVITY

Faith Witness Bracelet

Objective: To help the students share their faith.

Materials

- 3 different colors of yarn or nylon cording
- Scissors

Instructions

1. Assign a name—Faith, Hope, or Love—to each color of the yarn or cording. The primary color should be assigned “Love,” and it will act as the center of the bracelet.
2. Cut off 12” of the primary color.
3. The other two colors, standing for “Hope” and “Faith,” each need to be 48” long.
4. Pin the 12” Love cord to a board, desk or piece of cardboard so students can work on their knots easily.
5. Begin the bracelet with a square knot. A square knot consists of right over left and left over right.
6. Holding the Faith cord, make a loop to the left of the Love cord and over the top of it.
7. Bring the Hope cord over the end of the Faith cord, then behind the Love cord, and up through the Faith cord's loop. Tighten the knot.
8. Take the Faith cord (which is now on the right) and make a loop to the right of the Love cord and over it.
9. Bring the Hope cord over the end of the Faith cord, up behind the Love cord, and through the loop of the Faith cord. Tighten the knot.
10. Repeat these two knots until the bracelet is the length you want.
11. Tie a knot at the back of the bracelet, and cut the Faith and Hope cords off.
12. The Love cord will be used to tie the bracelet on the wrist.

Give the bracelet to a friend as a gesture of friendship to share your faith, or wear it yourself. Be ready to explain what it represents to those who ask.

Note: If square knots seem too difficult, braid the three cords to make a bracelet.

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13:13)

E1 Year 3 Book 3 Lesson 8—Saul Is Converted

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: Saul was converted by Jesus and dedicated himself to God's work.

Lesson Objective: To become witnesses for God by living a Christian life.

Bible Reading: Please put a check mark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a check mark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Acts 1:8b)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

Fill In the Blank

three	Saul	light	Damascus
-------	------	-------	----------

1. _____ was persecuting the followers of Christ. He even went as far as the city of _____.
2. Jesus spoke to Saul from a bright _____.
3. Saul couldn't see for _____ days and nights.

True or False

4. After Saul was healed, he became even angrier at Jesus and arrested more Christians. _____
5. Saul began to preach the word of God after he got baptized. _____

Short Answer

6. How did Saul show that he was a new person?

7. What are some ways that you have shown that you are a Christian at school?

8. What are some ways that you have shown that you are a Christian at home?

9. What are some things you will do to be a better Christian?
