

Paul's Conversion and Baptism

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.



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The BIBLE STORY

Bible Storytelling Tips

Paul's Conversion and Baptism

Acts 9:1-25

• Use lighting

effects: When you tell about Saul's conversion, dim the lights and flash a bright light. Then speak with a booming voice like Saul might have heard.

• 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."

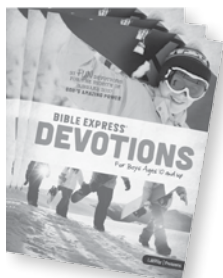
Ananias obeyed the Lord. He found Saul and told Saul that Jesus had sent him to help. Ananias put his hands on Saul, and suddenly Saul could see again. Saul got up and

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.



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Introduce the STORY

SESSION TITLE: Paul's Conversion and Baptism

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.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to describe an important event in their life. (Examples: birth of a brother or sister, receiving a special award, winning a championship) Did the event change them in some way? If so, how?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Called by God” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “Called by God.” Kids should color in the spaces according to the key to discover the name of someone in today’s Bible story. (*Saul*)

SAY • Today’s Bible story is about a man named Saul, who was also known as Paul. God surprised him in a really big way!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Introduction clues

Read the clues one at a time. Challenge kids to guess the identity of the person described. End with the descriptions of the apostle Paul.

1. Walked with God; was the father of Shem, Ham, and



Japheth; obeyed God and built an ark (*Noah*)

2. Lived about 1,000 years before Jesus was born; second king of Israel; father of King Solomon (*David*)
3. Lived in Nazareth; praised God with a song; mother of Jesus (*Mary*)
4. Tried to destroy the church; became a missionary for Jesus; wrote much of the New Testament (*the apostle Paul*)

SAY • Have you ever heard about the apostle Paul? Early in his life, Paul was better known by another name: Saul. Today we are going to hear the story of how Paul met Jesus.

OPTION 2: Spot the differences

Lead kids to form pairs, and give each pair a “Spot the Differences” printable.

- “Spot the Differences” printable
- pencils

Challenge partners to see how many differences they can find between the two pictures.

SAY • Today’s Bible story is about a man who met Jesus and was completely changed! His change probably wasn’t obvious on the outside, but his actions and attitude proved his heart was different. Let’s find out more.

Transition to teach the story

Teach the STORY

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- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate an ocean port by hanging a blue sheet or tablecloth as a backdrop. Stack large plastic tubs at one side as cargo. You may choose to play audio tracks of ocean waves in the background. Consider displaying the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- large globe

[Leader enters wearing a white outfit: white pants, white shirt or jacket, and a white hat. Leader is carrying a large globe.]

LEADER • Hello there! I'm [*your name*]. I just have to show you something incredible. [*Hold up the globe.*]

Look at all that blue! Did you know that about 71 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water? And almost 97 percent of all the water in the world is in the earth's oceans. I want to see that!

It's funny; I used to be such a landlubber. I liked being on dry ground! But the more I have learned about the ocean, the greater my desire has been to go

see it all for myself. There are five oceans in the world and I'm going to see them all! Each week, I'll share with you some discoveries I make. Then we'll dive together into God's Word, where we'll explore the experiences of the early church. I can't wait!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • For the next few weeks, we will answer a big picture question. This question helps us get a better look at what God was up to in the Bible stories we hear. Our big picture question is, *How do people hear about Jesus?*

Remember, before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples a job to do. The Great Commission is Jesus' instructions to His followers to go and make disciples. *God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle. Point out previous Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline or
Big Story Circle

LEADER • The Bible is made up of smaller stories that all fit together to tell one big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus. After Jesus' death and resurrection, He ascended to heaven. The Holy Spirit came down on Jesus' followers, giving them power to carry out Jesus' command to make disciples. The early church began, and more and more people believed in Jesus every day.

Our Bible story today comes from Acts. This book tells us about a man named Saul, who was also called Paul, and how he met Jesus.

- Bibles
- “Paul’s Conversion and Baptism” video
- 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, or show the Bible story video “Paul’s Conversion and Baptism.”

LEADER • Let me give you some background information about Paul. When he was born, his parents named him *Saul*, which is a Hebrew name. But since his dad was a Roman citizen, they gave him another name too: *Paul*. *Paul* is a Latin name. So *Saul* and *Paul* are names for the same person.

Saul grew up in a religious family. He was a Jew, and he followed the law very carefully. So when Saul heard people say that a man named Jesus was the Messiah, he did not believe it. In fact, he tried to stop people from telling others about Jesus. He arrested believers and even approved of them being killed, like when the Jews killed Stephen. He tried to put an end to the early church.

Saul was on his way to arrest believers when Jesus stopped him on the road. Saul saw a bright light from heaven and heard a voice. He said, “Who are you, Lord?” and Jesus said, “I am Jesus.”

Isn’t that incredible? After that, Saul knew that Jesus is Lord. Saul wasn’t the same after that. This story describes his *conversion*, or his change to a right relationship with God. Saul was changed because he believed Jesus is God’s Son. Then Saul was baptized to show that he believed in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus appeared to Saul and changed him inside

and out. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15) Jesus called Saul, 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.

When we trust in Jesus, we aren't just saying that we agree with the idea of Jesus as God's Son. Through the gospel, God opens our eyes to who Jesus really is. We put our trust in Him, believing that His death on the cross provides forgiveness for our sins and that because He was raised from the dead, He is King over everything.

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.

LEADER • Does anyone remember who said these words?

(*Jesus*) Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, and He said that the Holy Spirit would give His followers power to tell everyone in the world the good news about Him. We see this happening in the early church!

When Saul believed in Jesus, he received the Holy Spirit. **Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.** When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit gives us power to tell others about Jesus too. Let's sing.

Lead boys and girls in singing "To the End of the Earth."

- Key Passage Poster
- "To the End of the Earth" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Some of the people who knew of Paul when he was persecuting the church thought there was no way

- "Unit 30, Session 1" discussion starter video

he could have changed. Watch this.
Show the “Unit 30, Session 1” discussion starter video.
Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- Why did Maria take an interest in the object when Nigel tossed it aside?
- In our Bible story, some people thought Saul was too evil to change. Did God think that? What happened?
- Why are we sometimes hesitant to share the gospel with certain people?
- Is anything too hard for God? Is anyone too evil to be changed by His grace?

LEADER • God calls us to share the gospel and to pray boldly for others, trusting that God can change anyone’s heart. *How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.*

Sing (4 minutes)

• “A Mission from Above”
song

LEADER • **Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.** God has a mission for us all.
Sing together “A Mission from Above.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, thank You for sending Jesus to save sinners. Before we trust in Jesus, we are Your enemies like Paul was. Give us understanding and help us believe the gospel. Change our hearts to trust in You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Apply the STORY

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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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- sticky notes

Show the key passage poster. Guide kids to say the key passage together. Allow a volunteer to cover part of the poster with a sticky note.

Challenge kids to say the key passage again. Allow another volunteer to add another sticky note. Continue saying the key passage and adding sticky notes until kids say the key passage from memory or everyone has had a turn.

SAY • Great job! Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would give them power—and He did. The Holy Spirit gives power to every believer, even Saul. **Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.** We'll see in the next few weeks how God used Saul, also known as Paul, to spread the gospel to the world.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Acts 9. Remind kids that the Book of Acts was written by Luke. Luke also wrote the Gospel of Luke.

In the Book of Acts, Luke wrote about the things Jesus continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit. The

Holy Spirit worked through Jesus' followers—the church—and the good news about Jesus spread. Prompt kids to identify which Bible division the Book of Acts is in. (*New Testament History*)

Ask review questions about the Bible story. Kids should raise their hands if they know the answer. Call on kids to answer. If incorrect, provide the reference and encourage kids to find the answer in the Bible.

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

1. Why was Saul going to Damascus? (*He wanted to arrest believers there, Acts 9:1-2*)
2. What happened when Jesus spoke to Saul? (*A bright light shone from heaven and Saul fell to the ground. Jesus spoke to Saul and asked him why he was persecuting Jesus; Acts 9:3-4*)
3. What did the Lord tell Ananias to do? (*Go to Saul, Acts 9:11*)
4. How do we know Saul was changed? (*He began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, Acts 9:20*)
5. How did believers help Saul escape when the Jews were planning to kill him? (*They lowered him over the city wall in a basket, Acts 9:23-25*)
6. ***How do people hear about Jesus? God uses Christians to tell others about Jesus so they may repent and be saved.***

SAY • God had a purpose and a plan for Saul. God said He had chosen Saul to take the gospel to the Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites.

Saul, who was once an enemy of Christians, spent the rest of his life telling people the gospel and leading them to trust Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: First friend freeze tag

Clear an area for an active game. Choose one kid to be *It* and another kid to be Ananias. *It* will chase other players, trying to tag them.

If a player is tagged, he must freeze in place with his eyes closed and palms up. Frozen players cannot move until Ananias puts his hands on the player's palms and says, "Brother/Sister [*kid's name*]."

Then the player will return to the game. After several minutes, debrief with discussion questions:

- Who was Saul's first Christian friend? (*Ananias, Acts 9:17*)
- Why was Ananias unsure about visiting Saul? (*Saul had hurt and arrested believers, Acts 9:13*)
- How can you be a friend to someone who is a new Christian?

SAY • Believers were afraid of Saul at first, but Saul's early Christian friends told them how God had changed Saul and saved him. **Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.**

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.

OPTION 2: Real change

Display the object pairs on a table at the front of the room. Start with the first pair, water and ice. Ask kids to raise their hands if they can tell what the difference is between the water and the ice. Call on a kid to explain.

- Allergy Alert download
- water and ice
- popcorn and kernel
- raw egg and fried egg
- fresh bread and toast
- oranges and juice

As you point out each set of objects, talk about the changes. How did each object change? How did cooking or heating or squeezing change one object into another form?

SAY • When Jesus changed Saul, He changed Saul spiritually. Saul’s sins had separated him from God, but when Saul trusted in Jesus, God forgave his sins and gave Saul eternal life. **Jesus saved Saul from his sins and chose him to spread the gospel.** Conversion happens when a person repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus. God forgives that person and gives him new life. Jesus changes a person’s heart, and as a result, that person’s life is changed too.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, praising God for rescuing people who are dead in their sin and making them alive. Pray that God would be glorified through our own conversions and testimonies.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “In a Row” on the activity page.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “In a Row” activity 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.