

SAUL KNOCKED TO THE GROUND

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 8:26-9:25



No man is a match for the grace of God.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The persecution spread the gospel to many – As a result of the persecution of Christians by Saul and others, the church in Jerusalem was scattered. During this time of scattering, an angel instructed Philip to travel south. There he met an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the scroll of Isaiah. Philip explained to him how the Old Testament pointed to Jesus. The Ethiopian man was so affected by the gospel, he commanded his chariot to be stopped so that he might be baptized! After Philip baptized the eunuch, the Spirit of God carried Philip away to preach the gospel elsewhere.

Saul meets Jesus – Saul threatened to kill anyone who believed in Jesus. He received letters which gave him authority to arrest anyone who belonged to “the Way” in Damascus. The Way was a name given to early Christians who followed Jesus. Jesus said that He was the “Way” (John 14:6).

While traveling to Damascus, Saul was stopped in his tracks when Jesus appeared before him. Saul was blinded and had to be led into the city. For three days he remained blind until God sent Ananias to him. Ananias prayed for Saul and laid hands upon him. Immediately, his sight was restored. Like the Ethiopian, Paul was immediately baptized in confirmation of his conversion. In God’s words to Ananias we are given a glimpse of the difficult life that was to come to Saul. God said that Saul, later called Paul, would suffer much for His name (Acts 9:16).

The gospel bears fruit in Saul’s life – After his conversion Saul remained with the disciples and immediately proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues. People were amazed because he was a Pharisee who had been persecuting the followers of Jesus. His dramatic conversion served to confound the Jews there. This was further evidence that Jesus was alive and could transform lives.

Jesus once said to His disciples, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last.” See John 15:16. No place is this more true than in the life of Saul. It was by God’s initiative that Saul was converted, and the fruit of that conversion was dramatic.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

When the voice came out to Saul asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul did not know who was speaking. He questioned, "Who are you, Lord?" What an amazing answer came to him saying, "I am Jesus."

We, like Saul, are sinners who do not know Jesus. Saul knew that Jesus was a teacher, a man who lived and died on the cross. But Saul did not yet know and believe that Jesus was Lord, the Son of God, raised in power!

We come to know Jesus in a similar way that Saul did - not with a visionary appearance of Christ, but by God's initiative while we were still sinners. Saul was on his way to kill more disciples when Jesus revealed Himself to him. Saul immediately realized that the stories of Jesus' resurrection were true. Jesus was, and is, alive!



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 130:3-8

Connecting the passage to Christ:

The psalmist recognizes that we all deserve to be punished for our sins, and that every man is a sinner. If the Lord, in His glory, were to appear to us as He did to Saul on the road to Damascus, we would not be able to stand. Just as Saul fell to the ground, so would we. But we need not fear the Day of Judgment. We can, instead, hope in the Lord because He has redeemed us. The redeemer of Israel is Jesus. The psalmist would die waiting for his redemption. We, however, have no need to wait for our redeemer. Jesus, our redeemer, has come!

Questions for reflection:

- Why couldn't this passage be referring to anyone else beside Jesus? (Jesus is the only redeemer who can remove Israel's sins. Plenty of men were redeemers of Israel, saving them from an earthly enemy. But only Jesus brings eternal redemption. Only Jesus brings full redemption.)
- If Jesus has already come, what good are these words of hope to us? (Although Jesus has already come, salvation has not automatically come to all men. We are required to place our faith and hope in Jesus. Only those who place their hope in Christ will be saved. This psalm urges us to trust in Jesus and assures us of His forgiveness.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

CONVERSION

Supplies:

monarch butterfly life
cycle photos

Use the transition from caterpillar to butterfly in the life cycle of the monarch butterfly to illustrate conversion. The monarch is particularly interesting in this regard because its chrysalis is transparent, allowing the change to be observed. When the butterfly first pupates, the chrysalis is bright green revealing the innards of what was once a caterpillar. In time, the orange and black of the wings begin to form. Then, just before emerging, we see the transformation complete.

Use 2 Corinthians 5:16-19 to describe the conversion that takes place in our lives. Use the following questions to draw out the class:

- How was Saul like a monarch caterpillar? (Saul was devouring the church, just as a caterpillar devours leaves. Saul was ugly, just as a caterpillar was ugly. Then Saul was converted and became like a butterfly that no longer devours, but, instead, lives as a testimony to the glory of God. What was once ugly and despised, flits and flies with grace and beauty!)
- What did Saul do differently with regard to the church? (Instead of persecuting the church, he began to proclaim the Gospel and helped the church to grow! His conversion was convincing evidence that Jesus was alive and able to change men. See Acts 9:22)



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A LITTLE DRILL PRACTICE

Supplies:

- a large cross cut out of brown construction paper
- a large white tablet and easel

To help the children understand and remember what the word “conversion” means, set them in ranks as you would an army. Have them walk in one direction, and then when you give them the command, “Class, convert,” they should all immediately turn and go in the opposite direction.

After you have practiced the drill a few times, move to the easel and paper. Begin to ask the class what we should repent from. If they say greed, draw some money or write the word greed. Do this for other sins as well. Then put the easel on one side of the room and tape the cross to the opposite side of the room. Now, do your drill once again. Explain to them that as unbelievers we are walking toward evil and sin and against God. Give the command to convert. Then explain that as Christians we are walking away from sin toward Christ.

Ask them the following questions:

- When we are converted, is sin completely removed from our lives? (No. Just as sin, represented by the paper on the easel, is still in the room, so sin is still present in our lives.)
- Do Christians ever turn away from Christ to follow sin again? (Yes. Each time we sin we are turning back toward sin. But it is best to understand that our feet never change direction. From the day of our conversion, they always point toward Christ. Our heads, however, can turn away and look back toward sin. The author of Hebrews said it this way: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”)



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CLASSROOM DRAMA

Supplies:

any costumes you would
like to use

Do a drama in four scenes. You can narrate as the children act them out.

Scene 1 is Saul speaking murderous threats asking the high priest to go after the Christians.

Scene 2 is Saul with his companions getting knocked down by the appearing of the Lord.

Scene 3 is Saul being led as a blind man to Ananias.

Scene 4 is Saul preaching in the synagogue.

Simply use this to help the story come alive to the children. Then draw them out about Saul's conversion and why the people might have been skeptical, at first, of any change in Saul.

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies:

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Jesus appearing to Saul and knocking him to the ground.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

COMPARE THE CONVERSION

Supplies:

white board and markers

Compare the three accounts of Saul's conversion and harmonize them (come up with one complete story).

The conversion can be found in Acts 9:1-19, Acts 22:1-21, and Acts 26:12-23.

Use this exercise to talk about the conversion of Saul and the commission God gave him to reach the Gentiles. Help the children see that it was God who authored Saul's mission to reach the Gentiles. God, in His kindness and in fulfillment of His promise to reach all nations, converted the most ruthless of all the Pharisees for that purpose.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Conversion – The word conversion literally means “to turn.” This word is used several times in the New Testament to describe a person's turning away from sin. In Matthew 18:3 it is often translated as change: “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” In 1 Thessalonians 1:9 the word is used to describe the Thessalonians turning from idols to serve God. When we say that a person is converted to Christ, we are simply saying that person turned away from a sinful life and is now following Jesus.

