

Morning Overview

Lesson: Paul: Conversion and Calling

Lesson Objective:

In our story today we learn about Saul, his conversion and calling by Jesus. This is a pivotal story in the early church because Saul, a chief prosecutor and persecutor, is redeemed by Jesus on the Damascus Road. Saul's conversion and calling are a catalyst for the Church to grow through the work of the Holy Spirit. The region is changed, the Good News is preached, followers of Jesus live in obedience to him, and the Church grows. All of this is only accomplished through the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching Summary:

- God's promises do not change despite circumstances, people and even our inability to believe them. God keeps His promises even when we do not trust Him or follow His commands.
- God has promised to always be with His people. He is with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Church is growing, but also experiencing persecution.
- Saul is one of the chief persecutors of God's people. He seeks permission to hunt followers of Jesus in Damascus.
- On the Damascus Road, Saul encounters Jesus and Jesus rebukes Saul, calls Saul to a new life, and gives him instructions.
- Saul waits to be healed by Ananias. After receiving his sight, Saul immediately starts preaching the Good News.
- Saul now has become an enemy to the Jews. They killed Jesus, Stephen and now planned to do the same to Saul.
- Saul escapes Damascus and lands in Jerusalem. There a follower named Barnabas convinces other followers that Saul is a legitimate follower of Jesus.
- The life and mission of Saul to preach the Good News takes off. He is threatened immediately and constantly, but he remains determined to follow Jesus and be obedient to his calling.
- The Bible says there was a time of peace for God's people and that the Holy Spirit continued to grow the church larger and larger because of the way the followers of Jesus were living.

Scripture: Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-31

Story: Vos Child's Story Bible, Pages 342-346; The Beginner's Bible, Pages 512-517;
The Jesus Story Book Bible, Pages 334-340; The Gospel Story Bible, Pages, 256-257

Scripture Memory for July: Acts 26:17b-18 (ESV)

I am sending you (*point up to God and then to yourself*)

to open their eyes (*close your eyes with hands closed beside them then open hands wide as you open your eyes*)

so that they may turn from darkness to light (*turn around and lower your head covering it with your arms and then face the front again raising arms, lifting your hands to the light*)

... that they may receive forgiveness of sins. (*open wide your hands out in front of you*)

Craft: Conversion Booklet

Supplies: Paper with scenes, scissors, stapler

Instructions:

1. Fold paper top to bottom so title is on the outside
2. Fold side to side to create booklet
3. Cut along bottom to free pages; color if desired
4. Staple along the edge.

3's – Booklets have been prepared for 3-year-old classes.



If child has already done craft first hour, have them work on a coloring sheet.

Story

Transition

Boys and girls, what if you were walking on the sidewalk one day and a bright light flashed all around you and you heard a voice from Heaven. What would you do? [Allow for answers] In our story today we learn about a mean man and this very thing happened to him. It changed him forever. Let's find out what happens in our story today...

The Church Is Growing

The Church was growing. The Bible tells us every day more and more people believed the Good News! They believed that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sins and He rose from the dead! Peter and John were telling everyone in Samaria the Good News. Phillip met with the Ethiopian eunuch alongside the road and helped him understand the Good News. And then the Holy Spirit took Phillip to Azotus to tell everyone there the Good News. More and more people believed in Jesus – the Church was growing!

But as more and more people became followers of Jesus, there was someone trying to hurt them. This man's name was Saul.

Saul Bullies God's People

Saul was a mean guy. He was there the day Stephen died. The Bible says Saul held the coats of people while they threw rocks at Stephen. Saul cheered them on. Saul thought killing Stephen with the rocks was a good thing. Saul wanted to destroy the church. He went from house to house. He dragged out men and women and put them in jail. When this happened, followers of Jesus went to different places to live except for the Apostles. The Apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

The Damascus Road

In Jerusalem, Saul was still trying to frighten the followers of Jesus by saying he would kill them. Saul went to the high priest and asked him to write letters to the synagogues in the city of Damascus. Saul wanted the high priest to give him the authority to find people in Damascus who were followers of Jesus. If he found any there, men or women, he would arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem. The high priest wrote Saul the letters to go and find followers of Jesus. Saul took a few guys with him and left Jerusalem and traveled to Damascus.

Soon Saul was coming close to Damascus. He was almost there to find followers of Jesus. But then out of nowhere, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. Saul fell to the ground. He was afraid and did not know what was going to happen. Then Saul heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul! Why are you doing evil things against me?"

Saul said, "Who are you?"

The voice answered, "I am Jesus. I am the One you are trying to hurt. Get up now and go into the city. Someone there will tell you what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there, but they said nothing. They heard the voice, but they saw no one. Saul got up from the ground. He opened his eyes, but he could not see. So, the men with Saul took his hand and led him into Damascus. For three days Saul could not see, and he did not eat or drink.

There was a follower of Jesus in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision, "Ananias!"

Ananias answered, "Here I am, Lord."

The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight Street. Find the house of Judas. Ask for a man named Saul from the city of Tarsus. He is there now, praying. Saul has seen a vision. In it a man named Ananias comes to him and lays his hands on him. Then he sees again."

But Ananias answered, "Lord, many people have told me about this man and the terrible things he did to your people in Jerusalem. Now he has come here to Damascus. The leading priests have given him the power to arrest everyone who worships you."

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I have chosen Saul for an important work. He must tell about me to many people, to kings, and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." The Lord had chosen Saul to be his servant and follow Jesus. Following Jesus meant that others would hurt Saul, much like Saul tried to hurt other followers of Jesus. We'll find out soon that Saul will be thrown in prison, whipped, beaten, and hurt by many people.

Ananias was obedient to the Lord, even though he was afraid of Saul and what Saul had done. Ananias went to the house of Judas. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Saul, the Lord Jesus sent me. He is the one you saw on the road on your way here. He sent me so that you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately Saul was able to see again! Then Saul got up and was baptized. After eating some food, his strength returned.

Saul stayed with the followers of Jesus in Damascus for a few days. Soon he began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "Jesus is the Son of God!"

Everyone who heard Saul were amazed. They said, "This is the man who was in Jerusalem. He was trying to destroy those who trust in Jesus! And he came here to do the same thing. He came here to arrest the followers of Jesus and take them back to the leading priests."

But Saul preached more and more. Saul believed in Jesus more and more. The Bible tells us he would argue with others that Jesus is the Christ. His arguments were so strong that the Jews in Damascus could not argue with him.

After many days, the Jews made plans to kill Saul. They looked everywhere for Saul and watched the gate to the city all the time to see if they could catch him. But Saul learned about their plan. One night some followers of Saul helped him leave the city. They lowered him in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

Then Saul went to Jerusalem. He tried to join the group of followers, but they were all still afraid of him. They did not believe that he was really a follower of Jesus. But Barnabas accepted Saul and took him to the apostles. Barnabas told them that Saul had seen Jesus on the road. He explained how Jesus had spoken to Saul. Then he told them how boldly Saul had preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

And so Saul stayed with the followers of Jesus. He went everywhere in Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of Jesus. Many people tried to hurt Saul, but each time he escaped. The Bible tells us the church everywhere in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the Church became stronger. The followers of Jesus showed their obedience to Him by the way they lived. Because of this, the Church grew larger and larger.

Questions for Review

- Saul was a nice guy who loved followers of Jesus and gave them donuts. (No! Saul frightened followers of Jesus by saying he would kill them.)
- Saul wanted to hunt down followers of Jesus and throw them in jail. (Yes)
- Saul traveled to Damascus to find followers of Jesus. (Yes)
- Saul made it safely to Damascus with no problems. (No! A bright light from heaven appeared, and it was Jesus. Jesus told Saul to stop hurting His followers.)
- Jesus appeared to Saul before he got to Damascus. (Yes)
- Saul could not see after the bright light went away. (Yes)
- Ananias, a follower of Jesus, helped Saul when he could not see. (Yes)
- Saul preached in the synagogues that Jesus is the son of God. (Yes)
- Soon after Saul began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, other people tried to hurt and kill Saul. (Yes)