

Saul of Tarsus

Persecutes the Church, Then Becomes a Christian

Acts 8:1-3



New Testament 6
Part 1: The Apostle Paul

SUNDAY MORNING

New Testament 6 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-31; 22:1-21

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16b).

OLDER CHILDREN: "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["How Long was Saul Blind?"](#)
- ["Saul, Who Was Called Paul"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [Paul & the Fruit of the Spirit](#) Bible fact cards (provided under "N.T. 6 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- "Summary of the Bible" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from the books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- Life of Paul (Series 1) A Beka picture set (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, *not the lesson book*; note that only the apostles received the Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 2—skip card 1.2 or remove girl)
- Pictures of butterfly metamorphosis
- ["Map of New Testament World"](#) (provided in map section of curriculum Web site)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: When I am old enough, the Lord wants me to become a Christian.

OLDER CHILDREN: Anyone can become a Christian, no matter what he has done, because God loves everyone and will forgive if he is willing to change his life, like Saul (Paul) did.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Last week we studied about a Christian man who preached about Jesus. People got mad at what he said and they threw stones at him and he died. He was very brave and did the right thing even though people were very unkind to him. He wanted to teach others about Jesus so they could become Christians. Do you remember his name? (Stephen) Today, we are going to learn about a man who hurt and mistreated Christians, but then he changed. Even his name was changed. His name is Saul. Do you think someone that has done very bad things can become a Christian? Yes, God loves everyone and will forgive people when they obey Him and stop doing bad!

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Review last week's lesson, ending with the man (Saul) who held the coats of those stoning Stephen.

What is the worst thing you can think of for someone to do? If someone does any of those things, do you think God would ever forgive him and let him become a Christian? What if a man was hurting and killing Christians and then wanted to become a Christian himself? Do you think that could happen? Today we're going to learn about a man who truly believed he was doing the right thing by hurting Christians. Then something happened that changed his mind, and his life. Let's see what happened.

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. When Stephen was killed (stoned to death by an angry mob of Jews), one man in the crowd was specifically named: a young Pharisee from the town of Tarsus called Saul. While Stephen was dying, the men throwing stones at him laid their coats at Saul's feet. In other words, he was showing his support for Stephen's murder by guarding the coats while the other men threw stones. After the stoning of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus became the most zealous (enthusiastic) persecutor of the early Church.
2. Saul was an eager young man (maybe as young as 20 years old; this happened around 36-37 A.D.) who was born in Tarsus, a city in the Roman province of Cilicia. He was educated in Jerusalem under the famous teacher Gamaliel. Saul was one of many Pharisees who believed this new religious group called "the disciples" or "the Way" (Christians) was dangerous; so he wanted to do all he could to stop people from believing in Jesus. He went house to house, dragging Christians to prison. Saul was not content to search for the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem and other places nearby in Palestine. He wanted to travel outside of Palestine and hunt them down. He asked for, and received, letters of introduction from Jewish leaders

in Jerusalem to the synagogue leaders in Damascus. The synagogue leaders there were asked to cooperate completely with Saul.



NOTE: Three times (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4) Saul’s ruthless persecution of women is specifically mentioned. It was unusual for women to be imprisoned by the Jews.

In New Testament times, Damascus (today, the capital of Syria) was the capital of an Arabic kingdom controlled by Rome. It was about 150 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

“Saul” was a Hebrew name, “Paul,” a Roman name.

3. On the way to Damascus, about noon, Saul saw a blinding bright light and heard a voice—the voice of Jesus. The men traveling with Saul saw the light and heard a loud sound, but they did not hear or understand the words of Jesus to Saul. Saul did not know who was speaking to him at first. [God caused him to be blind, as He did other biblical characters when He wanted to get their attention or stop them from something wicked they had planned (Genesis 19:11; 2 Kings 6:18-20).] Saul’s men took him into Damascus, not understanding what had happened.
4. Saul waited to be “told what to do,” going without food and water for three days. God chose a man named Ananias (not the same Ananias as in Acts 5 or 23:2, of course) to go to Saul and tell him what he must do. Saul had a vision about Ananias coming to see him, to give him further instruction. [Describe Ananias’ reluctance, his reaction to God’s orders.]
5. Saul was very sorry for what he had done to so many Christians. His blindness was healed, and he was immediately baptized, becoming a Christian like those he had been killing and putting in prison. [With older children, note that even though Saul had seen Jesus and spent the three days praying, he still had to be obedient to God and be baptized to become a Christian.]
6. God chose Saul of Tarsus to be a great preacher to the Gentiles (non-Jews). He was chosen to be the 13th **apostle**. He immediately began to tell others about the Man Jesus who was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Saul started preaching in the synagogue in Damascus where he would have a ready-made audience. Soon he would begin preaching to Gentiles all over that part of the world, as God planned for him to do.



Apostle: a specially chosen messenger sent to speak the words of God; an apostle had to have seen the Lord and been an eyewitness of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 1:22; 22:14; 2 Corinthians 9:1), been selected by the Lord or the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:5; Mark 3:13-14; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:26; 9:15; 22:14-15,21; 26:16), and was given the power both to perform miracles and give others the ability to perform miracles through the laying on of hands (Mark 3:15; Acts 2:43; 8:14-18; 2 Timothy 1:6).

7. Saul of Tarsus completely changed his life after Jesus spoke to him and he became a Christian. Today God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible, so that we can know how to become Christians, too, just like Saul: hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized, then live faithfully to remain saved Christians.

8. Before he became a Christian, Saul was a very wicked man, but his faith in Jesus changed him. Jesus can help anyone change, no matter how bad he may be. Everyone makes mistakes (sins) (Romans 3:23), but everyone can change if we are willing to live like the Bible tells us to.
9. A major change of lifestyle is like the change of a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly. This is called “transformation” or “metamorphosis,” i.e., completely changing who we are and how we live (Romans 12:1-2). [Elaborate on the metamorphosis of the butterfly and the comparison to becoming a Christian as much as your class of school-aged children can understand. (Refer to the [August, 2007](#) issue of *Discovery*.) Keep in mind that preschoolers do not understand symbolism!]



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the articles “[The Testimony of the Man from Tarsus](#)” by Kyle Butt, and “[Is Baptism a Symbol?](#)” and “[Objections to Baptism](#)” by Dave Miller and on the Apologetics Press Web site for discussion about the details of Saul’s conversion.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

Ages 2-5:

- “[Saul of Tarsus Coloring Sheet](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- When telling the story, have a pair of kids’ sunglasses for each child. (Can be purchased at a party supply store. Can use temptra paint to paint the back of the lenses.) When you get to the part about Saul being blinded on the road to Damascus, pass out the sunglasses. When the children put on their glasses, they will be in the dark, like Saul. They can take their sunglasses home and tell their families about Saul being blind.
- Help the children act out the story. Use a bright flashlight to shine on “Saul.”
- Review game: Color and cut out a Bible character that can be Saul, and then laminate it. Make a road out of construction paper. On poster board, have a picture colored, cutout, and laminated of a Bible city that could be Damascus. Give each child a turn to hold “Saul” as the teacher asks a question from the story. If they answer correctly, they move Saul closer to Damascus. When everyone has had a turn, see if Saul made it to Damascus! (“[Saul Cutout](#)” and “[Damascus Cutout](#)” provided in activity sheets)

1st-2nd Graders:

- “How to Become a Christian” matching game: Write the scriptures related to each “step” of salvation on craft sticks. Write the “steps” on library pockets, mounted on a file folder or poster board. Have the children look up verses to match with the correct step. Make enough sets of sticks for the children to be able to work in groups of two to three to complete the activity.
- “A Special Time for Saul” game: Using a Carson-Delosa clock notepad or clock cutouts, cut clocks in half. On one half of the clocks write questions about the lesson. On the other halves, write the answers. Let the children match the clock halves. Use on a magnetic board

or file folder. (“[Clock Cutout](#)” provided in activity sheets)

- “[Chronological Events Activity](#)”: Write events from today’s lesson on strips of cardstock; begin with the fact that Saul was at the stoning of Stephen. Have the children put them in chronological order. Make several sets, and let the children work in groups to complete the activity. (provided in activity sheets)

3rd-4th Graders:

- “How to Become a Christian” matching game: Write the scriptures related to each “step” of salvation on craft sticks. Write the “steps” on library pockets, mounted on a file folder or poster board. Have the children look up verses to match with the correct step. Make enough sets of sticks for the children to be able to work in groups of two to three to complete the activity.
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- Have the children read the following:
 - Acts 9; 22
 - *Discovery* magazine articles: “Saul the Enemy of Christ” and “Paul The Friend of Jesus,” [May 2007](#); “The Conversion of Saul,” [December, 2008](#); [August, 2007](#)
 - *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, by Eric Carle

FINGERPLAYS:

“HOW LONG WAS SAUL BLIND?”

One day, two days, three days went by, *(hold up fingers as you count)*
Saul was blind as could be! *(cover eyes)*
Then Ananias came, *(walk in place)*
With a message from God, *(point upward)*
And Saul could see again! *(cover, then quickly uncover eyes)*

SONGS:

“SAUL, WHO WAS CALLED PAUL” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook
(Tune: “O Why Not Tonight”)

VERSE 1:

There was a man whose name was Saul.
He was born in Tarsus, as you know.
He hated all who followed Christ.
He was their foe.

CHORUS:

O why did he hate? O why did he hate?

The one who died for you and me,
He hated so!

VERSE 2:

One day a light shone very bright,
And Saul saw Jesus up above;
He said, "What will you have me do?"
Hate turned to love.

2nd CHORUS:

O how he did love! O how he did love!
The one who died for you and me,
He loved Him so!

Ananias baptized him into Christ,
And Paul preached Jesus far and near.
He worked for God both night and day,
He had no fear.

(2nd CHORUS)

*** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE
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WEDNESDAY EVENING

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INTRODUCTION:

Review [N.T. 6 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under “N.T. 6 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Review Sunday’s lesson (see [N.T. 6 Review Questions](#) for example questions)

Review how to become a Christian. You might list several examples of conversions in Acts on the board, ask them to look up the scriptures, and find out what those people did to become Christians.

OR you might want to talk about God’s plan for butterflies and how they change from somewhat ugly caterpillars into beautiful creatures, just like we can be completely changed.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

See Sunday morning’s lesson

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