#### Lesson 9:

#### Saul of Tarsus

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:

Acts 9

MEMORY WORK:

Acts 2:38

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

When I am old enough, the Lord wants me to become a Christian

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| **LESSON STARTS HERE** |

INTRODUCTION:

A few weeks ago 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!

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.

1. 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.
2. 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.]
3. 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.]
4. 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).

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/pub_dm/08012007/d0708.pdf) issue of *Discovery*.) Keep in mind that preschoolers do not understand symbolism!]

**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the articles “[**The Testimony of**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=139&amp;article=903)[**the Man from Tarsus**](http://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=139&amp;article=903)” by Kyle Butt, and “[**Is Baptism a Symbol?**](http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&amp;article=1232&amp;topic=379)” and “[**Objections**](http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&amp;article=2748&amp;topic=379)[**to Baptism**](http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&amp;article=2748&amp;topic=379)” by Dave Miller and on the Apologetics Press Web site for discussion about the details of Saul’s conversion.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL VISUALS (note disclaimers):

##### Betty Lukens’ felt pieces

* ABeka Flash-a-Card Series (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, not the lesson book;)
* Free Bible Images – Saved on flash drive. Can be presented on classroom tv. Script included in lesson file.
* When telling the story, have a pair of kids’ sunglasses for each child. (Can be purchased at a party supply store. Can use tempra 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.

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS:

### SUNDAY

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Saul sticker scene available through oriental trading. Attach this to a sentence sheet for use in the NT Binder.
* Help the children act out the story. Use a bright flashlight to shine on “Saul.”

### WEDNESDAY NIGHT

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Review Sunday’s lesson. (See [Review Questions](http://www.apcurriculum.com/dcirfol/4-24-32RQ.pdf) for example questions.)

LEARNING CENTERS AND ACTIVITIES:

* Play games/give directions using a blindfold
* Make dark glasses
* Review game: Color and cut out a Bible character that can be Saul, and then laminate it. ( One is in the lesson file) Draw a road on the dry erase board. Draw a sign for Damascus on one end and place Saul on the other end. Ask students a review question. Each time a question is answered correctly move Saul closer to Damascus

### Review Questions

1. Who was the man who was specifically named that was present when Stephen was killed?
	1. A young Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus
2. What did the men throwing stones at Stephen lay at Saul’s feet?
	1. Their coats
3. Who was Saul of Tarsus’ teacher in Jerusalem?
	1. Gamaliel
4. How had Saul been persecuting Christians?
	1. He had killed some and thrown some in prison.
5. What did Saul ask for and receive that would allow him to persecute Christians outside of Jerusalem and Palestine?
	1. Letters to the synagogue leaders in Damascus
6. What did Saul see and hear on the way to Damascus?
	1. He saw a light and heard the voice of Jesus.
7. What did the men traveling with Saul see and hear on the road to Damascus?
	1. They saw the light and heard a loud sound, but did not understand the words of Jesus.
8. How long did Saul go without food while he waited in Damascus?
	1. Three days
9. Who did God choose to go to Saul and tell him what he must do?
	1. Ananias
10. How did Saul feel about what he had done after Ananias talked to him?
	1. He was sorry.
11. What did Saul do immediately after Ananias talked to him and his blindness was healed?
	1. He was baptized to become a Christian.
12. To what group of people was Saul chosen to preach?
	1. The Gentiles
13. How does God speak to us today?
	1. Through the Bible
14. Where did Saul begin preaching?
	1. In the synagogue in Damascus

Additional Notes / Activities Performed & Curriculum Feed Back

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