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Saul Becomes Paul , A Life Transformed

Scripture: Acts 9:1-31

Theme: No one is too far from God's grace

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Saul Becomes Paul , A Life Transformed This lesson dives into one of the most dramatic turning points in early Christianity, where Saul's relentless persecution of the Church becomes his own conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-3). Students will explore how God's grace transcends human expectations, even for a zealous Pharisee like Saul, whose identity was defined by opposition to Jesus. The narrative reveals how Saul's encounter with the risen Lord (Acts 9:3-6) reshapes his mission, no longer targeting believers but now commissioned by God to bear witness to the Gospel (Acts 9:15). By examining Saul's transformation, the lesson challenges students to reflect on how God's grace operates in lives marked by sin, failure, or opposition, while emphasizing that redemption is available to all. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

One bright morning in Jerusalem, as Saul of Tarsus, once a zealous persecutor of the early Christian church, sat in prayer at the feet of the high priest, a blinding light suddenly overwhelmed him. The radiance was so intense that Saul stumbled and nearly fell to the ground. The vision was so powerful that he heard a voice, though he could not see anyone standing beside him: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?' (Acts 9:4). This question, spoken by Jesus Himself, shattered Saul's pride and plunged him into confusion.

The men who accompanied Saul, some of his closest associates, were also struck by the light and fell to the ground, terrified. Saul's vision was not just physical; it was spiritual. He had been chasing after believers, arresting them, and even dragging some into Damascus to punish them for their faith in Christ. But now, his mission had been reversed. God had chosen to speak to him through a vision, breaking through the walls of Saul's arrogance and

self-righteousness.

As Saul struggled to recover from the shock, he was led to the outskirts of the city by the men who had been with him. There, he was met by a man named Ananias, a devout Jewish disciple, who had been sent by God to restore Saul's sight. Ananias hesitated at first, not knowing whether to trust Saul's claim. But God reminded him in a vision, 'Go, for this man is a chosen instrument to proclaim My name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel' (Acts 9:15). Though Saul had once been a persecutor, God had saved him for a purpose, one that would bring redemption to the nations.

Ananias did not doubt Saul's call, but he asked him to prove his sincerity. Saul responded with a heartfelt confession: 'Lord, I have not sinned against heaven or against you. I was completely blind, but now I see' (Acts 9:18). His words were not just words; they were a declaration of repentance. Saul had once believed he was serving God, but now he understood that his anger had been against the wrong God, one who demanded justice rather than grace. His conversion was not about empty regret but about a radical turning toward Christ.

Within days, Saul returned to Jerusalem, where the disciples were still in fear after his violent arrest of their members. Though he had once been their enemy, the believers now recognized him as a man changed by God's power. Barnabas, one of the earliest Christian leaders, took Saul under his wing, introducing him to the other apostles. The apostles asked him if he had heard from God about his new mission. Saul told them the story of his encounter with Jesus, and they believed him. Though Saul had been a persecutor, his transformation was undeniable, his life was now dedicated to spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Saul's journey was not over. Though he had been saved, he still faced opposition. Some Jews accused him of teaching blasphemy, claiming he had even spoken to dead men. But Saul defended his faith, insisting that he had seen Jesus and that God had chosen him to be His witness. The apostles supported him, and he began preaching boldly in the synagogues, proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God. Though some resisted, Saul's message spread, proving that no one was beyond God's reach, even those who had once been His enemies.

Key Verse

Acts 9:15 , 'This man is My chosen instrument to proclaim My name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.'

The key verse (Acts 9:15 , 'This man is My chosen instrument to proclaim My name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.') calls us to respond to God's truth.

Activities

Activity 1: Storytelling: Saul's Transformation

Use this activity to bring the story of Saul's conversion to life. Students will create a visual timeline of Saul's journey from persecution to ministry.

Supplies needed:

- *Poster paper or large paper sheets*
- *Markers or colored pencils*
- *Sticky notes or small cards*
- *Printed images of Saul, Jesus, and the Damascus road (optional)*
- *Clothespins or tape for hanging the timeline*

1. Divide the class into small groups (3-5 students each). Assign each group a key event from Saul's story (e.g., Saul's vision, Ananias' encounter, or Saul's healing of the blind man).
2. In groups, have students create a visual representation of their assigned event using markers, drawings, or printed images. They should also write a short description on a sticky note.
3. After groups finish, have them present their scenes in a classroom timeline. Use clothespins or tape to hang their creations on a large poster board arranged chronologically from Saul's persecution to his ministry.

4. Discuss: How does Saul's story show God's grace working in unexpected ways? Why is it important for us to trust God even when we feel far from Him?

Activity 2: Debate: Who Can Be Saved by God's Grace?

A thought-provoking debate to explore how far God's grace extends. Students will argue both sides of the question: 'Can anyone, no matter how far from God, be saved by grace?'

Supplies needed:

- *Whiteboard and markers*
- *Printed debate prompts (optional)*
- *Timer for structured discussion*

1. Divide the class into two teams: Team A (for 'Yes, anyone can be saved') and Team B (for 'No, there are limits to grace').
2. Assign 2-3 key arguments to each team (e.g., Saul's story, the parable of the Prodigal Son, or biblical examples of repentance). Use the whiteboard to jot down points.
3. Have each team take turns presenting their arguments for 3 minutes. Encourage students to use Scripture to support their claims.
4. Facilitate a class discussion: How does God's grace make salvation possible for everyone, even those who seem the most hopeless? How does this challenge our assumptions about who is 'saved'?

Activity 3: Creative Writing: 'A Day in Saul's Life'

Students will write a short journal entry or diary from Saul's perspective, reflecting on his transformation. This helps them empathize with Saul's journey and see God's grace in action.

Supplies needed:

- *Blank paper or notebooks*
- *Pens/pencils*
- *Optional: Printed excerpts from Acts 9 for reference*

1. Assign a specific moment in Saul's life (e.g., his conversion on the road, his encounter with Ananias, or his first sermon).
2. Instruct students to write a short journal entry (3-5 sentences) as if they were Saul at that moment. What would they think, feel, or pray? Use details from the text (e.g., blindness, fear, or wonder).
3. Share optional prompts to spark creativity: 'How did you feel when you realized God was calling you?' / 'What was the hardest part of your transformation?'
4. Volunteer a few students to read their entries aloud and discuss how Saul's story shows grace breaking barriers.

Discussion Questions

- Acts 9:1, 6: What does it mean that 'the Lord appeared to him and spoke to him' (v. 4)? How can we trust God in moments when we feel far from Him?
- Acts 9:10, 19: Why do you think Ananias hesitated to meet Saul? How did God's assurance change his mind? What 'unexpected' ways might God use us to meet someone in need of grace?
- Acts 9:20, 25: Saul preached in Damascus, but the city was angry. How does this show that God's grace doesn't always make people welcome? Why is it important to be brave in sharing the Gospel, even when facing opposition?
- Acts 9:26, 31: How did Saul's life change after his conversion? What does this tell us about how God uses broken, imperfect people to spread His love?
- Mission Connection: Saul's story mirrors the lives of secret believers in Saudi Arabia today. How can we pray for them and share the Gospel in ways that honor God and protect others?

Prayer Focus

Pray for Saul's legacy: Ask God to use His followers today to break barriers and bring people into His kingdom, just as He did with Saul. Pray for secret believers in Saudi Arabia to hear and respond to the Gospel safely.

>> Missions Spotlight

Secret believers in Saudi Arabia face severe persecution for following Jesus. Pray for: (1) protection and safety for those sharing the Gospel in secret, (2) opportunities to encounter Jesus through the internet, satellite TV, or dreams, and (3) boldness to witness even in fear. Many are being transformed like Saul, from persecutors to protectors of faith!

-> To the Cross

God's grace isn't just for 'good' people, it's for the worst of sinners, the most religious, or those who feel beyond hope. Saul was once the enemy of Christians; today, he became their greatest defender. The cross doesn't just save us from sin, it saves us for a purpose, even in the darkest places.