

Saul Meets Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus changes lives. No one is too far gone for Him. When Jesus makes us new, the old life is gone, and everyone can see the change.

Bible passage: Acts 9:1–22. Students read Acts 9:1–9 and Acts 9:10–22 out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." *2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)* and "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." *Acts 22:16 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Acts 8:1–3, Acts 9:1–22 and Acts 22:6–16. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Can People Change? (5–10 minutes)

Name one side of the room "agree" and the other side "disagree." Read each statement. Students walk to the side they choose. 1) People never really change. 2) A bad habit can be broken. 3) Someone who has hurt a lot of people can become someone who helps a lot of people. 4) Only God can truly change a heart. Ask a few students on each side to explain. Say: "Today we'll read about the last person anyone thought would follow Jesus."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Background (tell it in your own words): Saul had already worked hard against the church. He was there when Stephen died and agreed with it (Acts 8:1), and he went into houses, took men and women, and put them in prison (8:3).

Read out loud: Acts 9:1–9. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **breathing out threatenings and slaughter** (9:1): threatening the disciples, and wanting them killed
- **of this way** (9:2): followers of Jesus (the early church was called "the way"); **bound:** tied up as prisoners
- **persecutest** (9:4): hurt, hunt down and treat cruelly because of what someone believes
- **kick against the pricks** (9:5): a prick was a sharp stick for driving an ox; an ox that kicks back only hurts itself
- **astonished** (9:6): amazed; **speechless** (9:7): unable to say a word



Read out loud: Acts 9:10–22. Old words in this passage:

- **a vision** (9:10): something God showed him; **enquire** (9:11): ask
- **the street which is called Straight** (9:11): a real street in Damascus; this **Judas** is not the one who betrayed Jesus
- **saints** (9:13): God's people, the believers
- **a chosen vessel** (9:15): someone God chose to carry His name to others, like a jar carries water
- **forthwith** (9:18): at once; **meat** (9:19): food
- **straightway** (9:20): right away; **confounded** (9:22): left them with no answer

Talk it through: Saul later told this story himself (Acts 22:6–16). He said the light came "about noon," and that he could not see "for the glory of that light" (22:6, 22:11). And he said Ananias told him: "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (22:16). In Acts 13:9 the Bible first calls him by his other name: "Saul, (who also is called Paul,)." Later he wrote many of the letters in the New Testament, like Romans (Romans 1:1).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Saul later said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). He was sure he was right. How can someone be completely sure and still be wrong? What changed his mind?
2. Jesus said, "why persecutest thou *me*?" (9:4). What does it mean that hurting Jesus' people is hurting Jesus?
3. Saul's first question to Jesus was "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (9:6). What would change if you asked that every day?
4. Ananias had heard how much evil Saul had done (9:13–14), but he obeyed and called Saul "Brother" (9:17). Who is hard for you to treat as a brother or sister?
5. Ananias came so Saul would receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost (9:17), and Saul arose and was baptized right away (9:18). In Acts 22:16, why do you think Ananias asked, "why tarriest thou?"
6. People said, "Is not this he that destroyed them?" (9:21). Paul later called himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). What does his life tell you about who God can save?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: in 2 Corinthians 5:17, **in Christ** means belonging to Jesus, **a new creature** means a brand-new person, **passed away** means gone, and **behold** means look! In Acts 22:16, **why tarriest thou** means why are you waiting, and **calling on the name of the Lord** means praying to Jesus and trusting His name. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say 2 Corinthians 5:17 this week; keep working on Acts 22:16 next week too.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Saul met Jesus and asked, 'what wilt thou have me to do?' The answer came through Ananias: 'arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord' (Acts 22:16, KJV), and Jesus sent Ananias so Saul would be filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:17). Paul later wrote, 'I speak with tongues more than ye all' (1 Corinthians 14:18, KJV). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" What do I think God is asking of me right now?
2. Who is someone I have written off as "too far gone"? How could I treat them like Ananias treated Saul?
3. Write a short prayer thanking Jesus that He makes people new, and asking Him to change what needs to change in me.

If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: pray every day for one person you think would never follow Jesus. And ask God each morning what He wants you to do.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus changes lives and that no one is too far gone for You. Make us new, help us obey You right away, and give us hearts like Ananias for people who are hard to love. In Jesus' name, amen."

Telling the hard part honestly: preteens can hear that Saul agreed with Stephen's death and put believers in prison (Acts 8:1–3). Keep the details short. The point is how far Saul was from God, and how completely Jesus changed him.

If a student says they've done too much wrong for God: answer gently. Paul called himself the chief of sinners, and said Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor.

