

AN ENEMY CONVERTS

Saul
Acts 9:1–31
AD 36

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

Jesus chooses us, even when we are enemies of God.

BIBLE VERSE

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that God chooses me to be His own child and makes me a new creation in Jesus through my Baptism.

LAW & GOSPEL

Born in sin, we are enemies of God.

God chooses us to be His own in Baptism and makes us a new creation in Christ Jesus, our Savior.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

On the road to Damascus, Saul encounters the risen Lord, who converts him from a persecutor of the Church to its greatest missionary—Paul. God sends Ananias to lay hands upon the temporarily blinded Saul, baptizing him in the name of the Living God. Despite the disciples' distrust of Saul's motives, Barnabas speaks boldly on Saul's behalf.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Acts 9:1–31 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read through the Third Article of the Creed in Luther's Small Catechism.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Digital device
- Old and new items
- Baptism picture
- Play dough
- Pudding mix, milk, bowl, whisk, cups, spoons
- Fun foam or cardstock
- Coins
- Pin the Tail on the Donkey game or the like

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Bible
- Device with prepped music
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- Sing songs using music found in the digital resource center, or sing your own favorite songs.

SAY

- Today, we'll hear how Jesus called someone to believe in Him. He wanted him to tell others about His love and forgiveness. Jesus loves you and made you His children too.**
- Don't tell me names, but have you ever known someone who was mean? What if that person stopped being mean? Would you believe them? Today, we'll learn how Saul went from being mean to telling people about Jesus!**

PRAY

Heavenly Father, it is such a blessing to be able to gather together and study Your Word. Guide us to know how much You love us and help us to learn how to love one another. In Your name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or both of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative after you've read it.

- FOR ALL AGES** As you are reading the story to your group, every time you read a sentence that is in bold type, pause and lead children in saying, "God was at work here!" To add physical action, have students give a big thumbs up as well.
- FOR ACTIVE LEARNERS** This narrative is full of action, so it lends itself well to acting out. Depending on the size and age of your group, assign pairs of children to act out the different events as listed in the Bible narrative.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose the questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- What was Saul like at the beginning of the story?
- How did God change Saul?
- What did Jesus want Saul to do?
- God was at work in Saul (who became Paul), one of the greatest missionaries of all time. How is God at work in your life?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion using these key points.

- Saul had been persecuting Christians for at least a year, jailing people for following Jesus. He was the last person one would expect for Jesus to choose. So his proclamation that Jesus is Lord was shocking—so shocking that some of the Jews wanted to kill him.
- We are no more deserving of Christ's love than Saul. We may not openly persecute God's people like Saul did, but we are still sinners who break God's Law every day. It is only through the redeeming work of Jesus on the cross and with the help of the Holy Spirit that we can share the love of Jesus with our neighbor.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ has called us to faith because of His great mercy and grace to us.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: Do the action rhyme at the end of the story with children.

Jesus had gone back to heaven. But He kept on helping His friends. He helped them show love to one another. They shared their homes and their money. They gave food and clothing to poor people. They told many people that Jesus loved them and died on the cross to pay for their sins. Many people came to believe in Jesus as their Savior and love Him too.

But there were some people who didn't love Jesus. One of these was a man named Saul. Saul was mean! He grabbed Jesus' friends and put them in jail. Jesus' friends were afraid of him!

One day, Saul left Jerusalem with some of his friends. He was going on the road to Damascus. He wanted to catch more of Jesus' friends and throw them in jail. All of a sudden, Saul saw and heard something to surprise him.

First, Saul saw a bright light coming down from heaven. The light was so bright that Saul was afraid. He fell down to the ground. Then he heard a voice calling his name. It said, "Saul, Saul, why are you trying to hurt Me?"

Saul asked, "Who are You?"

Who do you think it was?

The voice answered, "I am Jesus!"

Saul was surprised and afraid. He asked, "What do You want me to do?"

Jesus said, "Go into the city of Damascus and wait. You will find out what I want you to do."

Saul opened his eyes, but he could not see! He was blind. So Saul's friends led him by the hand to the city. Saul waited and waited. For three days he didn't eat or drink. He thought and prayed, asking God to forgive him.

After three days, Jesus sent His helper Ananias to talk to Saul. Ananias told Saul, "The Holy Spirit is with you. Jesus wants you to be His special helper. He wants you to travel to many places around the world and tell people how He is their Savior who takes away our sins." Ananias touched Saul and right away he could see again. Saul was so happy Jesus forgave him. He got up and was baptized right away.

Later, people called Saul by his other name, Paul. Paul loved Jesus and told many people about Jesus' love and forgiveness. He was not mean anymore but happy because Jesus was his friend, his helper, and most of all his Savior!

Do this action rhyme together.

I can tell, I can tell. *Point to mouth.*

Listen closely; I can tell. *Cup ears. Point to mouth.*

Jesus loves you and me. *Hug self; point.*

Can you hear me? I can tell. *Cup ears. Point to mouth.*

Jesus died, rose again. *Make finger cross.*

What good news! I can tell. *Point to mouth.*

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Saul believed Jesus was a false teacher who taught lies about God and pretended to be God's Son. He wanted to stop the Christians from telling other people about Jesus, so he went from house to house through Jerusalem, dragging off the people who believed in Jesus and putting them in prison.

Saul wanted to attack the Christians in Damascus, so the high priest wrote letters for him so that if he found any believers in Jesus, he could tie them up and bring them back to Jerusalem.

When Saul came near Damascus, **suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.** He fell to the ground and heard a voice calling, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" **The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."**

The men traveling with Saul heard the voice, but they didn't see anyone. **Saul got up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he couldn't see anything.** The men

took his hand and led him into Damascus. For three days, Saul was unable to see. He didn't eat or drink anything during this time.

Then, **Jesus told a Christian in Damascus named Ananias to go and lay his hands on Saul so he could see again.** Ananias was scared of Saul, but he obeyed Jesus. He went and laid his hands on Saul, and **Jesus gave Saul back his sight. Ananias baptized him.**

Right there in Damascus, Saul began teaching that Jesus was the Christ, the Savior of the world. Some Jews got angry and made plans to kill Saul. **But Saul found out and had his disciples lower him down in a basket through an opening in the wall.**

Saul returned to Jerusalem, but the Christians there were afraid of him. A devout Christian named Barnabas took Saul to the apostles and described how Jesus had appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus. **The apostles welcomed Saul, and he became known as Paul.**

LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

Go and Tell

Say, **God called Saul to tell people far away about Jesus. God calls people today to be missionaries too.** Have children pretend to travel far away to tell about Jesus. Pretend to fly in airplanes and ride in boats to go to different countries. Act out being hot walking in Uganda, riding over bumpy roads in the Philippines, or being cold in Alaska. Use a digital device to show pictures of the places you pretend to go.



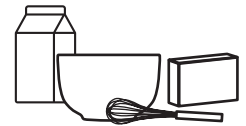
Something New

Give children a lump of play dough. Show them how to make a pinch pot by pressing a thumb in dough, then pinching the edges to make the sides. Talk about how they changed the dough into something new. God changed Saul's heart, and He changes ours too.



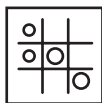
A Changing Snack

Make pudding using instant pudding, milk, a bowl, a whisk, and small disposable cups and spoons. Tell children you are going to change the powder into something good to eat. Add milk according to directions, and have them help stir it. Pour into small cups to eat. Say, **God changed Saul from an enemy into someone who believed in Jesus.**



Tic-Tac-Tell

Cut 4 x 4-inch game boards from fun foam or cardstock. Make a grid of nine squares on the board, leaving a border around the edge. (Each square will be about one inch.) Use two sets of coins (e.g., dimes and nickels) for markers to play tic-tac-tell. The first child to get three in a row tells how they would show Jesus' love or tell about Him.



Old and New

Show items depicting old and new (e.g., old and new shoes, dead and fresh flowers, withered and fresh carrots, pictures of old person and baby). Ask if we can make the old/dead item into a new/alive one? No. Say, **Jesus is the only one who can make things new again. Jesus changed Saul from an enemy into a friend.** Show a Bible and Baptism picture. Jesus calls us through Baptism and His Word. He changes us, too, and gives us new life as His forgiven children, His new creation.



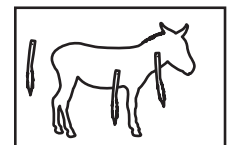
Learn the Bible Verse

Read the Bible Verse, 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." God changed Saul from an enemy to a friend. He made Saul a new creation. Divide children into two groups. Each group says half the verse. Then switch.



Pin the Tail on the Donkey

Play Pin the Tail on the Donkey. Point out it is hard to know where to put the tail when you can't see. Discuss how Saul couldn't see Jesus was his Savior. He hurt Christians. But Jesus gave Saul eyes of faith to see Him as his Savior. Now Saul wanted to tell others about Jesus. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside so we can live as His children.



LEAVE

SAY

Jesus chose Saul in a very dramatic way. Jesus chooses us to be His children and His witnesses too.

PRAY

Dear Jesus, thank You for calling Saul to spread Your Gospel message to the world. Thank You for calling me to be Your child in Baptism. Help me to share Your Gospel message to all the people in my world. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.