



## LESSON 79

3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Principle:** God changes the direction of our lives.

**Bible Character(s):** Saul

**Scripture Reference:** Acts 9:1-19



**PERSONAL PREPARATION:** Before this weekend, read through Acts 9. Saul persecuted Christians for following Jesus. While on his way to Damascus, probably to arrest any Christians he found there, God appeared. Saul was blinded by a light from heaven, and heard God speaking to him as he fell to the ground. He was led into Damascus, where he regained his sight, was baptized and began following Jesus. Saul's life is a beautiful example of God's redemptive love and mercy.

Reflect on when God intervened in your life and changed the direction you were heading in. Perhaps you may not have had a Damascus road experience like Saul, but there was a time when you recognized and understood who God is, and your life began to change. After the Lord changed your heart and mind, your focus shifted from yourself to God's kingdom and He gave you the desire to pursue Him and His Word. Be prepared to share that with your campers. Consider the following quote as you think through this lesson.

*"We often times get our own agenda – and God can change that in an instant: 'You are not your own; you are bought with a price. You will be told what to do.' That is what conversion is: It is a change from thinking that you can run your own life, to an acknowledgment that God holds the program in his hands, and he has the right to tell you what to do. This was the first thing Paul experienced when he became a Christian, this right of Jesus Christ to be Lord, and to tell him what he was to do." Beloved Enemy by Ray C. Stedman*

God's loving, redemptive plan for us includes a radical change in the direction of our lives, much like Saul's. As believers, our goal is to abide in Him daily, as He changes our heart to become more like Jesus. If we trust Him, we will submit to His direction for our lives instead of pushing for our own desires and plans.

**\*\*NOTE TO TEACHERS\*\***

Before campers arrive, you should hide the empty treasure chest somewhere in the room for the "Wrong Way Hunt" activity later in the lesson.

## **PLUG IN TIME - 5-10 minutes as the kids begin to arrive**

Arrive early to check the supplies in the bin and review the lesson. Write today's principle on the whiteboard. Remember to greet all campers upon arrival; meet their parents; welcome and introduce all visitors. Create a welcoming cabin for all campers!

## **Direction Conversation**

Ask the class if anyone has ever gone on a road trip. Did they use a map or GPS? Did they get lost? Let the campers tell stories about times they (or their parents) have not followed directions and have gotten lost, or have had to do something to correct mistakes.



## **BIG GROUP TIME - 35-40 minutes**

As you line up, remind campers we are going to have fun as an entire Camp Grace group! We are going to live out GRACE by **Glorifying God** through worship, **Respecting All Leaders**, and **Accepting Responsibility** to listen with attentive ears, minds, and hearts - fully **Celebrating Christ** with passion! We should **Encourage Others** to do the same, by not distracting them from their worship of God.

## **The Bridge to Small Group**

Today we will discuss forgiveness, how God intervened in Saul's life, and how God intervened in our lives.

## **Small Group Time - 25-30 minutes**

## **Getting Started**

If your cabin did well in Big Group, acknowledge it. If not, take a couple of minutes to talk about how they can do better next time.

**What did you learn in Big Group? What were the two staff members doing?** (They were judging the applicants on their past mistakes, and trying to find the perfect person for the job.) **What did they learn?** (We are all sinners, no one is perfect; just as God used Saul when no one would have picked him, God uses people who believe and trust in Jesus, even though they are sinners, because He forgives them of their sins.)

**Last week we studied about a man named Philip. How did God use Philip?** (God told Philip to speak to an Ethiopian man, a complete stranger.) **Did Philip obey God?** (Yes, he did exactly what God told him to do.) **What did Philip tell the Ethiopian?** (Philip helped him understand what the Bible said about Jesus.) **He shared the Good News of the Gospel, and the Ethiopian man came to faith and was baptized. God wants to use us to spread His kingdom. We can share our faith with others, and help others come to know Jesus.**

**Can you remember a few weeks ago when we talked about Stephen? What happened to him, and**

why? (Allow responses.) He was stoned to death for telling others about Jesus. Can you remember who was present, watching Stephen be stoned by the leaders of the High Council? (See Acts 8:3) Saul was there. He wanted Stephen to be killed because he was a follower of Christ. Saul persecuted people who believed in Jesus by putting them in jail. He made Christians suffer.

Today we are going to read more about Saul. Let's begin in Acts 9 [NLT].

## Acts 9:1-2

<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. <sup>2</sup> He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

Saul believed in God. He followed Moses' commands, but he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. He thought his beliefs were right. His plan was to persecute the people who believed in and followed Jesus. That was the direction he chose for his life. We can be like Saul in thinking we know the best way to live our life. When we choose to live life our own way — like Saul did — it can ruin our life and others' lives.

## Wrong Way Hunt



The purpose is to illustrate how we can live the way we want to live, or the way the world says we should live, and be headed in the wrong direction.

### Supplies:

Empty treasure chest (1 per bin, hidden in room\*)

Choose one or two campers to find the treasure chest that's hidden in the room. When they find the chest, have them bring it back to the table. Choose another camper or campers to open it up – and find that it is empty.

\* Depending on the campus and/or class sizes, this activity could be done with the chest hidden somewhere in the building (rather than just in the classroom) or outside and the entire class searching for it

## Tie It Together



What happened when we found the treasure? (Allow responses.) It was empty! How did it make you feel, and why? (Allow responses.) Sometimes we want to follow our own plan for our life, or we think the world can show us how to live our life. We think we know what is best for ourselves, but we end up empty. Our plan is not the best way. God has a better plan for us and desires for us to follow Him. He knows what is right for us because he created us. God can and will change the direction of our lives.

Let's keep reading to see what happens to Saul.

## Acts 9:3-9

<sup>3</sup> As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

<sup>5</sup> "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting!" <sup>6</sup> Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

<sup>7</sup> The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! <sup>8</sup> Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. <sup>9</sup> He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

Jesus appeared to Saul, blinded him, and gave him clear directions. What do you think went through Saul's mind during this time? (Allow responses.) How did the Lord respond when Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" (Allow responses.)

## God Wants Your Heart and Your Passion



The purpose is to examine how God desires our heart and passion.

### Supplies:

Worksheet – "Wanted" poster side (1 per camper)

Have the campers draw a self-portrait on the wanted poster. As they draw, talk to the campers about how much God loves them and wants them to trust in Him with all of their heart.

## Tie It Together



Do you feel wanted by God? Do you see His desire for your love? (Allow responses.) God created us. He loves us so much that He sent His own son to die for us even as we rejected Him. God desires for our hearts to be centered on Him. Saul was a sinner, just like we are sinners. He killed and persecuted people that believed in Jesus. What if someone hurt your parents or other people that you love? (Allow responses.) You would probably be upset at that person. Saul was killing people that Jesus loved, yet Jesus loved Saul and wanted Saul to believe in Him. He forgave Saul of his sins. God loves us as well, even though we are sinners. He loves us so much that He wants to change the direction of our lives. He wants us to pursue Him with our whole heart and mind. He wants us to follow Him. He wants you!

Let's continue to see how Saul responds to his blindness.

## Acts 9:10-16

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a believer in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, calling, "Ananias!"

*"Yes, Lord!" he replied.*

*<sup>11</sup> The Lord said, "Go over to Straight Street, to the house of Judas. When you get there, ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying to me right now. <sup>12</sup> I have shown him a vision of a man named Ananias coming in and laying hands on him so he can see again."*

*<sup>13</sup> "But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem! <sup>14</sup> And he is authorized by the leading priests to arrest everyone who calls upon your name."*

*<sup>15</sup> But the Lord said, "Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. <sup>16</sup> And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake."*

God spoke to Saul, and blinded him by a bright light. For the three days he was blind, he fasted and he prayed. After he recognized and understood who Jesus was, Saul chose to believe in Jesus and trusted Him with his life. God sent Ananias to place his hands on Saul because God had a plan for Saul. He had a specific purpose for Saul's life. God also has a purpose for each one of us.

Let's see what happens when Ananias goes to Saul.

### Acts 9: 17-19

*<sup>17</sup> So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. <sup>19</sup> Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days.*

God revealed Himself to Saul in a dramatic way on the road to Damascus. After Saul's encounter with a Holy God, he recognized that he was a sinner. He needed Christ to save him. His blindness made him dependent on God. Saul repented, and began to follow Jesus, worshiping Jesus with his whole heart. Saul's life changed. God dramatically changed the direction of Saul's life.

God intervenes in our lives as well. When we put our faith in Jesus as Savior, we have the Holy Spirit living inside us. Through the Holy Spirit, God makes Himself known to us and changes the direction of our lives because He has a plan for each one of us. He wants us to know Him and depend on Him. We can trust Him with all of our heart, and worship Him daily.

## Stephen, Saul and Me



The purpose is to see how God changed Stephen and Saul, and how that relates to our life.

### Supplies:

Stephen and Saul signs (1 set per bin)

Characteristic cards (1 set per bin)

Hang the two posters on the wall. Read each character card, and have the campers place the character card beside the correct person's name. After this is done, talk through Stephen and Saul's responses to their experiences with Jesus. Ask the campers how they have experienced Jesus in their life. How can they respond to what He has done in their life?

\*\* After the lesson, please take the cards down from the signs, remove the tape, and clip the set back together. Leave the clipped set in the bin for the next session/destocking.

## Tie It Together



Stephen and Saul saw God in two different ways. Stephen participated in the early church and probably heard about Jesus through the apostles. Saul persecuted the early church. He encountered Jesus through a blinding light on a road. Their experiences were different, but both chose to believe and trust in Jesus. They responded by worshiping Him as they lived their lives. God changed their hearts and they became new people because their sins were forgiven.

## The Direction of My Life



The purpose is for the campers to examine how God has changed the direction in their life.

Supplies:

Worksheet - "God Changed My Life" side (1 per camper)

Road signs set (1 per camper)

Have campers think about a time when God has done something to change the direction of their lives. It could have been when they first came to know Jesus or a time when they felt tempted to disobey their parents. Perhaps they experienced their prayers answered in a personal way. Have them cut out each of the road signs. Have them glue the **stop sign at the intersection of the roads** and draw a picture of what was happening in their life when God intervened. Then they can glue the **traffic light on the left fork in the road** and draw a picture to show how God changed the direction of their life. Have them glue the **wrong way sign on the other side** and draw a picture of what would have happened if God did not intervene and they had gone down the wrong path. Teachers, this would be a great chance to share a way that God changed your own life.

## Tie It Together



Has God changed the direction of your life? Maybe you can remember a time when God changed your behavior, your thoughts or feelings? (Allow responses.) How did God help you live in a way that glorified Him? (Allow responses.) God wants us to trust Him with our whole heart. He is a kind and loving God. He has a plan for our lives, and His plans are better than ours. If you are a follower of Jesus, your desire should be to follow Him and honor Him with your life. We can have faith that His will for us is "good, pleasing and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

## Wrapping Up

God changes the direction of our lives. He loves us, and desires for us to love Him and worship Him. He wants us to turn away from our sin, and trust in Him. We can come to know God through reading His Word, the Bible. The Bible teaches us to trust Christ with our lives. Stephen and Saul both chose

to follow Him, and both men suffered a great deal. We also have a choice to follow Him. We can put our belief and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Our lives will not always be easy, but we can know that Jesus loves us and He has an amazing purpose and plan for our lives. We can have hope in living forever with Him. God created us and loves us. We can trust our good and loving God.

## Prayer Time

Spend a few minutes in prayer to close small group time. Thank God for loving us and sending His Son to die for us. Ask Him to help us trust in His plan, and to help us live in a way that glorifies His name.



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