

Saul Is Converted

Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-22

MEMORY VERSE

ACTS 9:22

“But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

1/2 cup vinegar, 1/4 cup water, 3 tablespoons baking soda, a tall glass, a long handled spoon, foil, 5 drops liquid dish detergent, a large baking dish, and 3 drops of red food coloring.

A scepter made of a dowel and a bow (or something more creative).

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Volcanoes

You will need:

1/2 cup vinegar

1/4 cup water

3 tablespoons baking soda

a tall glass

a long handled spoon

foil

5 drops liquid dish detergent

a large baking dish

3 drops of red food coloring

Set the glass right side up in the middle of the pan. Use the foil to form the cone-shaped volcano around the glass. Put the baking soda in the glass, then add dish detergent and food coloring. Gently pour in the water, then stir gently. Slowly pour the vinegar into the volcano. Wait and watch what happens.

Explain to your class that a real volcano is very powerful; it can destroy everything in its path. Ask if they think God is more powerful than a volcano. The answer is, of course, Yes! Explain that **the good news of the gospel tells of God's power to give salvation to everyone who believes**. When we trust God for salvation, we trust that He has the power to save us. He has encapsulated this power in His gospel message! Jeremiah 32:17 tells us that there is nothing too hard for God! We are going to see the power of the gospel in a man's life by the name of Saul today. Let's find out what happens...

LESSON TIME!

ACTS 8:1-4

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

The beginning of the church started out with the great day of Pentecost when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit in a powerful and dynamic way. The gospel was proclaimed and many turned to Jesus for salvation. But persecution soon followed as the religious leaders who denied Jesus as the Messiah set their minds and hearts to oppose anyone who accepted Him.

Saul was a zealous persecutor of the Church, devoting his life along with the religious leaders to stop Christianity from spreading. Saul's zeal as a Pharisee was displayed most vividly in his hearty approval of Stephen's execution. He was determined to persecute anyone who would accept the gospel and, as a wild animal mangles its prey, "made havoc" of the Church (Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6). In spite of the oppositions, the gospel still spread.

ACTS 9:1-9

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Many Christians fled Jerusalem because of the persecution and sought refuge in other cities and countries. Saul tracked them down, even traveling 150 miles to Damascus in Syria to bring Christians back in chains to Jerusalem.

In Saul's heart, he thought he was serving God by persecuting the church and putting an end to the spread of the gospel. Saul soon realized that this Jesus whom he thought was dead, was alive and real.

Confronted by the risen Christ, Saul was brought face to face with the truth of the gospel. The conversion of Saul is believed to be one of the most important events in the Church since Pentecost. A man driven to persecute Christians found out that he was persecuting Jesus. If someone like Saul can be saved, anyone can be saved. **The good news of the gospel tells of God's power to give salvation to everyone who believes.**

What do you think you would do if Jesus were to appear before you? We would fall as a dead man in awe of the glorified Christ just as Saul did and as the Apostle John would later experience (Revelation 1:17).

Saul made some wonderful discoveries that day. To his surprise, Jesus was alive, and the truth of the gospel was real. Saul knew that he was a sinner and in desperate need of salvation. Realizing his need for salvation, he surrendered his life to Jesus and resolved to obey. Just like Saul, true conversion comes from a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and leads to a new life in relationship with Him.

I Have the Power!

Make a royal scepter out of something like a dowel and a wrapping bow (you can, of course, get more creative). Have your class stand in a circle and pass the scepter around as you play music. When you stop the music, whoever is holding the royal scepter has “the power”; they can give a command that the class must obey until the next time the music stops. Continue this for a while so that several children get to have the “power.”

Ask your students what it felt like to be so powerful. Explain the power of God’s Word and that **the good news of the gospel tells of God’s power to give salvation to everyone who believes.**

ACTS 9:10-14

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

Have you ever met someone who you thought could never or would never become a Christian? Ananias did. To him, the conversion of Saul seemed impossible. After all, Saul had pursued believers to their death.

Despite these understandable feelings, Ananias obeyed God and ministered to Saul. Sometimes God will want us to do something that seems difficult, requiring more faith and trust in Him to accomplish the task. We should never limit God. He can do anything. We must obey, following God's leading. We must also remember **the good news of the gospel tells of God's power to give salvation to everyone who believes.**

ACTS 9:15-19

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

God had a beautiful plan of ministry for Saul which involved not only great blessing, but great suffering, too. Saul was to become Paul the Apostle, transformed into a dynamic witness for Jesus, but he would have to suffer for his faith (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

God also has a beautiful plan of ministry for us. Like Saul, God has called us to commitment, not to comfort. He promises to be with us through suffering and hardship, not to spare us from them.

Ananias found Saul, as he was instructed, and lovingly laid his hands on him, greeting him as "Brother Saul." With good reason to be scared, because of Saul's reputation, Ananias obeyed God. It's not always easy to show love to others, especially if we are afraid of them or doubt their motives. Yet we must follow Jesus' command (John 13:34) and Ananias' example, showing loving acceptance to other believers.

By the power of God, Saul's eyes were opened and he could see! He was a new man, because he had met Jesus. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul went to be baptized and later ate some food. It was Ananias who had the privilege of serving the Lord by ministering to Saul.

ACTS 9:20-22

Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul had an earnest desire to proclaim to everyone who would listen, that Jesus was alive and the gospel is true. His life was changed, and he had a deep desire for others to receive the same salvation that only Jesus can give.

Saul used his theological training to good advantage in pressing home the truth that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah. He had set out to persecute the Church in Damascus, but ended up preaching Jesus. It's no wonder that the Damascus Jews were amazed at Saul.

We do not have to know everything about the Bible to share the gospel with others, but we should always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

Saul had a personal relationship with Jesus and he wanted to tell anyone who would listen. Like Saul, we to have a personal testimony as Christians because Jesus has changed our lives now and for eternity. **The good news of the gospel tells of God's power to give salvation to everyone who believes.** Saul counted it a privilege to share the gospel with others, because he was committed in his heart to please the Lord, wishing that no one would perish.

The Keeper of the Gospel

Write the steps of the gospel in big letters on the chalkboard, so that your class can read or study them (for younger students, explain what the steps are so they can remember them; you can simplify them to be age appropriate). When they've had sufficient time to study them, erase the board.

- 1) Man's sin separates him from God.
- 2) Jesus was God in human flesh. He came to earth born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, was sacrificed on Calvary to cleanse us from our sins, and rose again on the third day, conquering death, Hell and the grave.
- 3) All who receive the free gift of salvation provided by God through Jesus, are born again spiritually, and the Holy Spirit lives inside them, empowering them to live obedient, victorious lives.

Have one child be the "keeper of the gospel" by walking around the circle of students. Have him tap a student on the shoulder. The tapped student must repeat the steps of the gospel in order before the "keeper" makes it all the way around the circle to become the next "keeper."

Play this game for a while, giving several students a chance to be "keeper." Explain the importance of knowing the gospel and being ready to share it, because **the good news of the gospel tells of God's power to give salvation to everyone who believes.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to share our faith when the Lord gives us opportunity. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.