

Bible Story 8: SAUL ENCOUNTERS JESUS

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18

MEMORY VERSE(S): Ephesians 3:20 or 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

BIBLE STORY:

Saul was a Jew who was born in Tarsus and born a Roman citizen. He was raised in Jerusalem. He studied the law under the teacher **Gamaliel**. Saul lived as a Pharisee, the strict religious group who observed the law. Saul was very zealous for God, believing he should oppose those who spoke about Jesus.

As a young man, Saul approved when the church's leader Stephen was stoned. Afterwards, Saul threatened the Lord's disciples. The high priest gave him permission to go to the **synagogues** in **Damascus**, taking men and women believers as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Around noon as Saul was on his way to Damascus, a bright light suddenly blazed from heaven upon him. Saul fell to the ground. A voice said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Saul asked, "Lord, who are you?"

The voice replied, "I am Jesus. I am the one you are persecuting. Get up! Go into the city where you will be told what to do."

Those with Saul saw the light, but saw no one. They heard a sound, but did not understand the voice. They were speechless. When Saul got up and opened his eyes, he could not see. He was blind! So those with him led him by hand to Damascus. For three days, Saul was blind and did not eat nor drink.

Meanwhile, the Lord spoke in a vision to a disciple named Ananias, who lived in Damascus. The Lord said, "Ananias, go to Judas' home and ask to speak to a man from Tarsus named Saul. He has seen you come in a vision, putting your hands on him and restoring his sight."

Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard about his cruelty to Your believers."

The Lord replied, "Go! I have chosen Saul to proclaim My name to the Jews and also non-Jews (Gentiles). He will be a witness of seeing Me on his way to Damascus."

Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on Saul and his sight returned. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul was baptized. After eating some food, his strength returned.

Saul stayed in Damascus, preaching he saw Jesus on the way to Damascus and Jesus is the Son of God. Some Jews did not believe Saul's story. They planned to kill Saul, catching him as he left the city gate. However, at night Saul's followers lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. Saul escaped.

Saul went to Jerusalem. The believers were afraid of Saul and did not believe his story of seeing the Lord. A believer and leader in the church named Barnabas took Saul to the apostles. He said, "Believe his story. He did see the Lord on the way to Damascus. Now Saul courageously preaches about Jesus. In fact, the non-believing Jews tried to kill him because of his preaching about Jesus."

Because of persecution, the believers took Saul to Caesarea. Later he went to Tarsus. Saul preached the Good News of Jesus everywhere he went.

There was a time of peace for the believers and the church grew in number.

Later when **Saul** was a leader in the church and a missionary, they began calling him by his Roman name "**Paul**" (beginning in Acts 13:16).

Gamaliel

was a highly respected rabbi, teacher of the law. In Acts 5:33-40, he persuaded ones not to put apostles to death, because they could be fighting against God.

Synagogue

was a place to worship, read and study the law, and pray. It was a place to teach children to read. Sometimes it was used as a court of justice, to judge, sentence and punish offenders. Synagogues were located in different cities and villages.

Damascus

is located northeast of Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee. It was a major trade center. The distance between Jerusalem to Damascus was about 150 miles.

Saul - Paul

When Saul became a believer, his Jewish name "Saul" was used. Once he was a strong leader in the church and missionary, his Roman name "Paul" was used.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Ask questions appropriate for your group of listeners.)

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. How can you apply this story to your life?

GENERIC QUESTIONS:

1. Who are the main people in the story?
2. What problems did the people face? What happened?
3. Have you had any similar problems you would like to share? What happened?
4. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Saul on the way to Damascus?
 - What happened?
2. Who is Jesus to you personally?
3. Who was Ananias?
 - What did the Lord tell Ananias to do?
 - Why was Ananias not sure about helping Saul?
 - What happened when Ananias saw Saul?
4. Are you ever hesitant about sharing Jesus with someone? Why?
 - Who can help you so you can share Jesus with that person?
5. After Saul received his sight and was baptized, what did he do?
 - How did the non-believing Jews in Damascus react to what Saul was saying?
 - How did the believers help Saul escape?
6. Did the believers in Jerusalem believe Saul and his story about seeing Jesus? Why?
 - How did Barnabas help Saul?
 - How can we help other people come to know Jesus personally?

LIFE LESSONS: (Choose Life Lessons appropriate for your group of listeners.)

1. Jesus can transform and change lives.

Saul was cruel when he persecuted the believers, but Jesus changed his life to share the good news of Jesus. No matter what a person has done, Jesus can change that life, if that person believes and follows Him.

2. God wants every believer to share the good news of Jesus, even when feeling hesitant.

Ananias was not sure about talking with Saul, who was cruel to believers. However, he obeyed the Lord. Even when hesitant, we need to share the good news of Jesus. God will give us courage and be with us.

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES: (Choose an activity or activities appropriate for your group of listeners.)

DRAMA: First tell the Bible story. Then designate people to take the parts and act out the story, saying the appropriate words at the appropriate time.

PANTOMIME: First tell the Bible story. Then designate people to be certain people in the story. The leader retells the story with the participants acting out their part without speaking.

DRAMA: PAUL ENCOUNTERS JESUS	
PERSON	WORDS TO SAY
NARRATOR:	Saul was zealous for God, believing he should oppose those who spoke about Jesus. Saul received permission from the high priest to go to Damascus. He could take men and women believers to prison in Jerusalem. Around noon as Saul was on his way to Damascus, a bright light suddenly blazed from heaven upon him. Saul fell to the ground. A voice said,
VOICE OF JESUS:	“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”
SAUL:	“Lord, who are you?”
VOICE OF JESUS:	“I am Jesus. I am the one you are persecuting. Get up! Go into the city where you will be told what to do.”
NARRATOR:	Those with Saul saw the light, but saw no one. They heard a sound, but did not understand the voice. When Saul got up and opened his eyes, he could not see. So they led him by hand to Damascus. For three days, Saul was blind and did not eat nor drink. Meanwhile, the Lord spoke in a vision to the disciple Ananias, saying
VOICE OF JESUS:	“Ananias, go to Judas’ home and ask to speak to a man from Tarsus named Saul. He has seen you come. Place your hands on him and restore his sight.”
ANANIAS:	“Lord, I have heard about his cruelty to Your believers.”
VOICE OF JESUS:	“Go! I have chosen Saul to be My witness of seeing Me.”
NARRATOR:	Ananias went and entered the house. He placed his hands on Saul and his sight returned. Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. Saul was baptized. Saul stayed in Damascus, preaching that he saw Jesus on the way to Damascus and Jesus is the Son of God. Some non-believing Jews planned to kill Saul, catching him whenever he left the city gate. However, at night his followers lowered Saul in a basket through an opening in the wall. Saul escaped. Everywhere Saul went, he shared the Good News of Jesus. There was a time of peace for the believers and the church grew in number. Later when Saul was a church leader and missionary, they began calling him by his Roman name “Paul.”