

Unit 9

Week 1 On the Road to Damascus

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: Acts 7-9

Main Teaching Points

- Paul's encounter with Jesus totally transformed his life.
- God's forgiveness is for everyone.
- God still transforms the lives of people who follow him today.

Themes to discover

A Jew of Jews

Saul was brought up as a high-ranking and highly-educated member of the Jewish religious elite (see Philippians 3:4-5) He wasn't just any old Pharisee, but as Paul himself reveals in Acts 22:3 a Pharisee trained and educated in Jerusalem by the greatest religious teacher of them all, Gamaliel. Paul in other words was a top theologian steeped in the law and traditions of the Jewish religion. If anyone knew the Scriptures, it was him. He would have been thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, and he would have also known that the penalty for those who falsely claimed to be the Messiah or worshipped just such a person was death. At this time the followers of Jesus were simply known as people who belonged to 'the Way' (see Acts 9:2). Saul well understood what this meant. Because in his interrogations of the men and women he arrested and then put to death, he would have learned all about Jesus' teachings, and how this carpenter from Nazareth claimed that the way to God the Father was not through religious ritual and meticulous observance of the law but through faith and trust in Him. It was perhaps not that surprising, then, that Acts 9:1 tells us how Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. The followers of the Way quite simply challenged everything Saul stood for.

A Total Transformation

Acts 9:18 tells us that once Ananias prayed for Saul to receive the Holy Spirit, immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. Baptism was a radical, public act, probably in the local river, where you declared your willingness to be known as a follower of Jesus and a member of God's people. It involved declaring that Jesus - not the Emperor - was your Lord. It involved leaving behind the security and safety of the old Jewish religion and a willingness to live by faith. It involved severing old ties of friendship and family and recognizing the church around you as your new circle of family and friends. Saul spent several days with the disciples there. Why? Because they were his new family. And we can be sure that those days would have been spent studying the Scriptures, praying together, and worshipping the Lord who had worked so powerfully in Saul's life.

The **Introductory activity** helps introduce one of the themes of the story.

The **Story** and **Quiz** tell and reinforce the biblical story.

The **Prayer activity** helps the children to think truthfully about their own spiritual lives

The **Activity** explores how tough it can be to make good choices and how we need God to help us.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

Why did some of the followers of Jesus run away to other countries?

How do you think Ananias first felt when God told him to go and see Saul?

Ages 7-11

Why do you think God needed to appear to Saul so dramatically?

What was the biggest change for Saul?

Week 1 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea

Opposites Game

You will need

Opposites game cards

What to do

Choose 3 volunteers who come up one at a time and do a mime. Tell everyone that they have to guess what the words written on cards are. All the words are verbs (doing words). The volunteer however is going to mime the *opposite* of each word. So everyone must remember that when they work out the mime, they should say the opposite. Once they think they have the right answer they put their hands up to have a guess. As soon as the mime is guessed correctly move on to the next one.

In today's bible story, we are going to be introduced to a man called Saul. A very dramatic thing happens to him which makes him have a big change of heart. He ends up being the complete opposite of what he was before!

Story telling suggestions for unit 9

Choose some of these options to help tell the story.

1. Read the story from the Lion Storyteller bible with good pace and expression. To add visuals to your storytelling, use the available PowerPoints. (see digital resources) To make your storytelling more interactive, see the ideas on page 160 of the Lion Storyteller bible for each story.
2. Use the short videos provided to tell the stories. (see digital resources for this unit)
3. Interactive storytelling Week 1 'On the Road to Damascus' -Story Circle. Week 2 'The Earth Shakes – with percussion, Week 3 'Paul is shipwrecked' - using a parachute.

Story

pages 150-151 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Quiz Blindfold!

You will need

'On the Road to Damascus' Quiz Questions (see resources)

'On the Road to Damascus' Quiz Score sheet (see digital resources/resources)

Blindfolds

What to do

Stick the Score sheet visual on the wall or if using PowerPoint use a wall or screen to show the score sheet. Divide your group into two teams and ask questions alternatively. Children should put their hand up if they know the answer. When a team member gets a question right, s/he comes forward and puts on a blindfold. Guide him/her to a spot several feet away from the score sheet. S/he walks towards the sheet and puts a finger on it. Whatever section of the sheet is chosen, that is the number of points the team wins for their correct answer. Add up the points as you go along. The team with the most points at the end wins!

Prayer activity

You will need

Stones

What to do

Ezekiel 36:26 says:

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. (NIV version)

Saul's heart was a heart of stone. He followed all the rules of his religion to the letter, but he had no love or compassion in his heart. His encounter with the living Lord Jesus changed him completely and his heart of stone changed to a heart of love, kindness, and faithfulness.

Our hearts can be like stone too. Without God's Spirit to help and guide us we can become selfish and uncaring.

Take a stone and hold it in your hand. Quietly ask Jesus to take away the hard places in your heart and give you a tender heart of love.

Activity Making Tough Choices

You will need

Signs saying, "Doing the right thing - Pleasing God" and "Doing the Wrong Thing - Hurting God" (see resources)

'Making Tough choices' cards

What to do

When we follow Jesus, we turn away from all the things we did that didn't please God and we try to live in a way that does please Him. We love Jesus and we don't want to hurt him.

In Luke 10 v27 Jesus talks to a man who wants to know how he will be able to spend eternity or forever in heaven. Jesus says:

"'You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.'
And 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

God wants us to love him and talk to him by praying.

God wants us to be honest and stick up for the truth.

He doesn't want us to lie or say bad words or say cruel unkind things to each other.

He wants us to love other people as much as we love ourselves and help them and care for them.

It can be hard to do the right thing sometimes. Have a listen to what happened to these four people. After each story I want you to choose where to go - over here where it says saying "Doing the right thing - Pleasing God" OR over here where it says "Doing the Wrong Thing - Hurting God"

Read out each scenario and allow the children to move to the sign of their choice.

We all need a story like Saul's. It might not be a really dramatic one, but it will still be a wonderful one – a miracle – a change from going one way getting further away from God – to going the opposite way – getting to know Jesus and getting closer to God. Being close to God helps us making the right choices.

Week 2 The Earth Shakes

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: Acts 16 :16-36

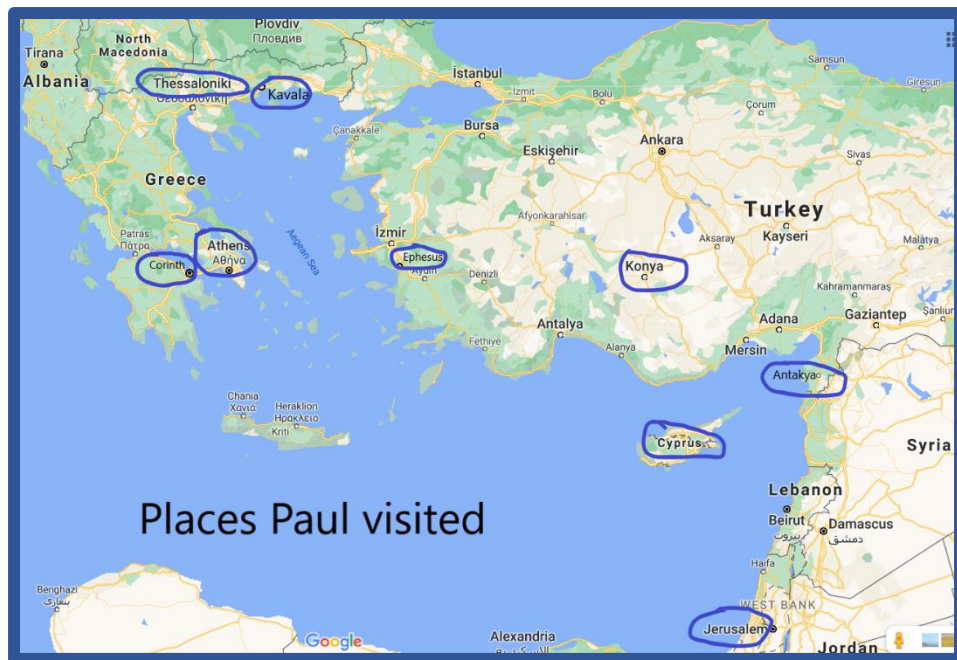
Main Teaching Points

- Paul and Silas dedicated their lives to sharing the good news of Jesus.
- Sometimes they suffered for doing this, but God was always with them.
- God is always with us, through good times and bad.

Themes to discover

Paul the traveller

Paul was a great traveller, covering thousands of miles around the Mediterranean area by boat and on foot. On the modern day map to the right you can see some the places that Paul visited starting off in Jerusalem. He first set sail from Antioch which is now called Antakya in modern day Turkey. Paul also visited Cyprus, Turkey (Iconium now called Konya and Ephesus), and Greece (Athens, Corinth, Thessaloniki, and Philippi, now in ruins but near the city of Kavala).



Sharing the good news

At the time of this story, Paul is in Philippi in northern Greece. Wherever he went, he always found out where the local Jewish community worshipped and went to tell them about Jesus. Sometimes they believed but more often than not they reacted against Paul and he was forced to leave and instead share the good news with Gentiles in the area. Paul often got into trouble for being a Christian as he does here in Philippi.

The **Introductory activity** and the **Game** are a fun way to introduce and think about being locked up in prison.

The **Story** and **Quiz** tell and reinforce the biblical story.

The **Prayer activity** helps the children understand that God is with us through tough times.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

Why were the slave girl's owners angry?

How would you feel if you were thrown into the prison even though you were innocent?

Ages 7-11

What do you think the other prisoners thought about Paul and Silas loudly singing praises to God at midnight?

Why do you think the Philippian jailer was convinced that Paul and Silas were telling the truth about Jesus?

Week 2 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea Escape from Prison

You will need

Flip chart and pens

What to do

Imagine you had a friend in prison, and you want to get him/her out of there. How do you do it? You're about to go and visit and you want to smuggle something into the prison that will help him/her escape! The prison wardens aren't very clever or very observant in this prison, so you have a good chance of getting some items though! What will you bring?

Write up the ideas that the children come up with and talk about how they could be used to help the prisoner escape. Ideas might include a hacksaw, a key, a rope, a stick of dynamite, a spade, a prison warden's uniform etc. Discuss how you might get these things in e.g. hide the hacksaw in a loaf of bread and how the prisoner would use them e.g. climb over the wall with the rope.

In today's story, Paul is put in prison. Listen out for 2 things!

1. What happens to allow him to escape?
2. What makes him stay and not escape when he has the chance?

Story

pages 154-155 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Quiz Earthquake!

You will need

'The Earth Shakes' Quiz Questions (see resources)

'The Earth Shakes' Quiz Score Sheet -PowerPoint (see digital resources)

Building Blocks (or items you can build with e.g. yoghurt pots)

2 tables

What to do

Set up the PowerPoint to show the score sheet.

Divide your group into two teams and ask questions alternatively. Children should put their hand up if they know the answer. Explain beforehand that when a team member gets a question right, s/he chooses a letter from the Power Point score sheet. Behind each letter there is a number or an earthquake picture. If the player gets a number, they go to their team's table, take that number of blocks and begin to build a tower. They can build their tower any way they like. The aim is to have the highest tower at the end. If a player chooses a letter with an earthquake picture, a leader will shake their table like an earthquake until all their blocks have fallen down. Continue the quiz until all the questions have been asked. The team with the highest tower at the end is the winner.

Prayer Activity God is with us

In small groups chat with the children about the difficult situation Paul and Silas were in. Things couldn't get much worse for them. In Acts 16:22 the bible tells us that they had had their clothes torn off them and they were beaten with a whip. After that they were thrown into prison.

What would you have been thinking if you were Paul or Silas?

Would you think that God had left you? That God had abandoned you?

Would you be angry with God for letting you suffer like this?

Paul and Silas were amazing because they didn't blame God for their misfortune. They still trusted that God was with them. So instead of complaining they praised God and prayed that God would help them. And He did! How did God help them?

When we face tough times let's remember that God is with us! He is there throughout every day of our lives, in good times and in bad. Pray together.

Dear God,

Thank you for watching over me. I am happy you are always with me! Thank you for loving me and protecting me. Help me to have faith enough to know that you are with me even in bad times.

Thank you for sending Your Son, Jesus, to be my Saviour and friend.

I love You.

Amen.

Game Jail break

You will need

Chairs (2 less than your group size)

Number labels for the chairs

What to do

Put pairs of chairs in a big circle and label each pair with a number. Ask the children to find a partner, making sure no-one is left out. A leader should be ready to make up a pair if needed. Choose one pair to stand in the middle of the circle and all the others sit on the seats. The pair in the middle are in jail and they must try to break out by getting seats for themselves.

To play, a leader calls out several numbers at a time e.g. 1, 4 and 5 and those pairs must get up and quickly find another pair of seats to sit on. Meanwhile the pair in the middle will try to get seats for themselves too. Whoever is left without seats must go to jail by standing in the middle of the circle. If the leader calls out 'jail break' everyone seated must get up and find new seats, but they cannot move to the seats beside them on the left or the right. The aim of the game is to never end up in 'jail.' At the end give a cheer or a small prize to any pairs who didn't end up in jail.

Week 3 Paul is Shipwrecked

Information for Leaders

Bible Reference: Acts 27-28

Main Teaching Points

- Paul got into trouble with the Jewish leaders for his preaching.
- Paul used every opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with people.
- We can read Paul's letters to fellow Christians in the bible.

Themes to discover

Paul the prisoner

After journeying through many countries around the Mediterranean for over a decade, Paul returned to Jerusalem. Jewish leaders falsely accused him of inciting riots and showing disrespect towards the Jewish temple and he was arrested by Roman soldiers. The Jewish leaders demanded his death, but Paul's Roman citizenship required Roman officials to carefully follow the proceedings of Roman law and provide protection and a fair hearing. Paul was put on trial and appeared in court a number of times over a period of two years, but the Jews were not able to substantiate their accusations. Finally, Paul invoked his right as a Roman citizen and requested to appear before the Emperor Caesar's highest Roman court in Rome.

Paul's journey to Rome

During the time when Paul was on trial, God had spoken to him, telling him that he would testify about Jesus in Rome. So Paul knew that the journey to Rome was a fulfilment of God's words to him. (Acts 23:11). Paul was accompanied on his journey by Luke, the writer of the book of Acts who included himself as a companion of Paul when he recorded, "We boarded a ship from ..." Acts 27:2. In addition to Luke, Aristarchus joins Paul on the ship. Aristarchus was from Macedonia and had been with Paul on his 3rd Missionary journey in Ephesus (Acts 19:29) and Macedonia (Acts 20:2-4).

God gives Paul insight throughout the journey as to how to bring them safely to the end of their voyage. When Paul relays this information to the centurion Julius at Fairwinds, (Acts 27:10) he is ignored, and Julius instead takes the advice of the captain and the ship owner (Acts 27:11) with disastrous consequences. When all that Paul has warned becomes reality, they begin to realise that Paul words are to be trusted. (Acts 27:30-32) Paul encourages the men onboard in the worst of the storm and gives them the message from God that the lives of everyone on the ship will be saved though the ship itself will be lost. Everything that Paul says comes to pass.

The **Introductory activity** helps introduce the children to Paul's journeys to many countries.

The **Story** and **Game** tell and reinforce the bible story.

The **Challenge** helps the children to immerse themselves in a part of the story.

The **Prayer activity** gives the children the opportunity to give their worries to God.

Additional discussion questions

Ages 4-7

Have you ever had a scary journey? What happened?

How did God speak to Paul when he was on the ship?

Ages 7-11

What did the crew do to keep the ship afloat in the storm?

Imagine your own home was in danger of being destroyed like Paul's ship and you only had time to save 5 items. What would you save?

Week 3 Session Outline

Welcome and Intro

Registration/Welcome/Prayer

Intro Idea

What to do

Seat everyone in a circle. Ask the children to think of a country which starts with the same letter as their first name. Go round the circle and ask the children to say 'My name is _____ and I want to go to _____' e.g. My name is Erin and I want to go to England. The next person then says their name and country. Younger children will probably be happy at this level, but you could challenge the older children to repeat all that went on before, e.g. Her name is Erin, and she wants to go to England, his name is Charlie, and he wants to go to Canada, my name is Tori, and I want to go to Turkey etc.

Talk about how Paul the missionary went to lots of countries to tell people about Jesus. In today's story he is going on a journey which turns out to be very eventful. Listen out for all the places Paul gets to in today's story.

Story

pages 156-157 from The Lion Storyteller Bible

See Story suggestions for this unit

Challenge Make a Campfire

You will need

A variety of resources for making a 2D or 3D campfire such as:

Yellow, orange, red, tissue paper,

Brown paper, cardboard tubes, twigs, cotton buds, pebbles, glue, markers,

Cotton wool, battery tealights, sheets of paper/light card etc.

Some Campfire pictures as examples (see resources)



What to do

Working in small groups or individually, challenge the children to make the most realistic campfire they can with the materials you provide.

Younger children could try making a 2D picture and older children could have a go at a 3D model. Give them a time limit for this activity and then judge the campfires and give (generous) feedback. You can declare a winner in each category if you like.

Talk about

Can you remember which part of today's story had a campfire in it? Retell that part to the person beside you.

Prayer Activity Message in a Bottle

You will need

Plastic bottles

Sheets of paper

Pens/ pencils

What to do

The men on the boat with Paul were so worried and afraid that they couldn't eat. They thought they were going to die in the storm. If they could have sent a message to somebody they loved, what do you think they would have said?

Can you think about times when you have felt worried or afraid? Write or draw your fears or worries on some paper. When you are finished, roll up your paper and push it into a plastic bottle.

Sit in a circle and toss your bottle into the middle of the circle as if you are tossing it into the sea. Next ask the children to retrieve a bottle from the middle and take out the message. Go round each one and let them show the message they have found and talk about all the fears and worries.

When Paul was on the boat, he wasn't worried like all the others because God spoke to Him and gave him understanding about what was going to happen. He had peace from God in the middle of the storm.

Here's what Paul wrote at another time to the followers of Jesus at Philippi.

Don't worry about anything but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel. Philippians 4:6-7 (CEV)

Pray together.

Lord Jesus,

Thank you that you are bigger than our worries. Thank you that you are bigger than our fears. When we are worried or afraid, give us faith to turn to you and ask for your help. Calm our fears about _____ and our worries about _____. Give us your peace.

Amen

Game

You will need

Chairs/benches or mats

Masking tape

What to do

Tape off a large rectangular section of the room but leave some room around the outside. The taped section represents a boat. Around the outside place chairs, benches or mats or anything the children can sit on. These represent floating cargo. The rest of the floor represents the sea.

To begin gather the children inside the 'boat'. On command they run to different parts of the boat.

BOW – run to the front, STERN - run to the back, PORT - run to the left, STARBOARD- run to the right

When the leader shouts 'ABANDON SHIP' the children must run and find something to sit on. Begin with enough chairs or equivalent for everyone but as the game progresses, begin to take chairs away. Anyone who can't find 'floating cargo' (i.e. something to sit on) and remains in 'the sea' (i.e. on the floor) is out.

Keep playing for several rounds. Give a big cheer to the children who are left on the boat at the end of the game.

“Dive In” Activity Week

Welcome and Intro

Recap briefly on the stories covered in the last 3 sessions using some of the recap ideas at the beginning of the programme.

There is an information sheet to go along with each activity. It is helpful if leaders talk about the story as a reminder to the children when they are explaining the activity.

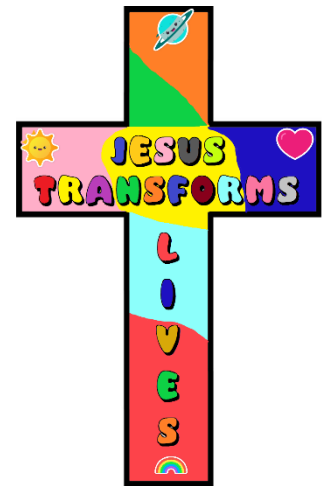
Get creative with the Story Cross Transformation

You will need

Cross templates printed onto card (see resources)
glitter, sequins, gems, colourful tape, stickers etc
Glue, scissors, colouring pens

What to do

Leave out all the resources on a table with the cross templates. Encourage the children to use the resources to transform their cross into something bright and beautiful to show the transformation Jesus makes in our lives.



Recreate a scene Fish Scale Eyes

You will need

White PVA glue in small to medium bottles

What to do

Direct the children to put a very thin amount of glue to coat the palm of their hand. Let it dry. Then peel it off.

Gently place the fish scales over your eyes – how well can you see?



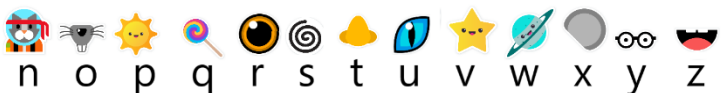
Write the Story Coded Messages

You will need

Coded Messages (see resources)
Pencils/erasers

What to do

Leave out the coded message sheets and pencils on a table and let the children crack the codes.



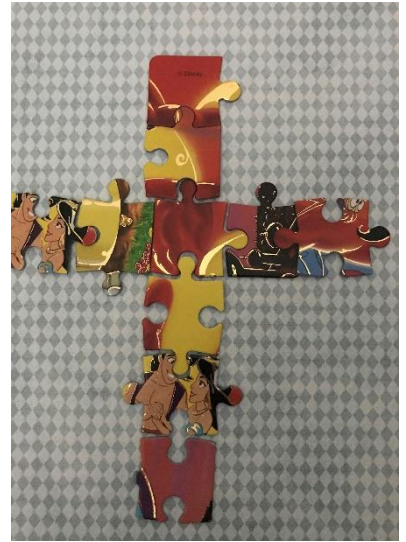
Make the Story Jigsaw Cross

You will need

A4 sheets of coloured or patterned card
Jigsaw pieces from old jigsaws
PVA glue

What to do

Leave out sheets of bright coloured or patterned card and lots of jigsaw pieces. The jigsaw pieces can be lots of different sizes. Make up a sample cross or show the children what to do. Children can make their own cross by gluing each piece onto the background and fitting the pieces together as best they can.



Eat the Story Campfire cupcake

You will need

Chocolate cupcakes
Chocolate buttercream icing (e.g. Betty Crocker's Chocolate fudge icing)
Chocolate bars e.g. Twix, KitKat, or wafer rolls
Red/yellow/orange boiled sweets or lollipops

What to do

Beforehand melt the sweets in the oven on some parchment paper at 190°C for around 10 minutes. Swirl the colours together. Leave aside to dry completely. Break up with a rolling pin into shards.
Leave all the ingredients on a table. Children add the buttercream to the cupcake and then add chocolate bars as sticks and shards of boiled sweet as flames.



Pray the Story – Changing Hate to Love

You will need

Changing Hate to Love Prayer sheet (see resources)
Pens/pencils

What to do

Print out copies of the prayer sheet and leave on a table with pens and pencils. Have a leader available to help children with ideas for their prayers. If possible, pin up the completed prayer sheets together for the duration of the session.

