

Saul Meets Jesus

Acts 9:1-31

Lesson Highlights: God's family is for everyone. Always has been. But we see this in many of the stories at the start of Acts. It's as if Luke really wants us to notice: it's actually happening! To God, the more different kinds of people join the family, the more beautiful the whole group becomes.

STORY POEM

On the road Jesus called
Saul's name.
From that day on
Saul was not the same.

STORY : PRESCHOOL

There was a man named Saul who loved God very much. He lived at the same time as Jesus' friends and helpers. But when he listened to what they were saying about Jesus, Saul thought "No, no! This is not the truth! Jesus is not God's son!"

He thought they were telling lies about God. This made Saul mad. He needed to stop Jesus' friends from lying about God.

One day, Saul was going to a city called Damascus. Say that with me: Damascus. He was going to take Jesus' friends away. Saul thought, "I will put them in jail and that will stop them from telling lies about God."

Let's go on the road, but remember, Saul is mad, so use our mad voice:

We're walking, we're walking, we're walking on the road.

We're walking, we're walking, we're walking on the road.

We're walking, we're walking, we're walking on the road. And stop.

Saul was almost to Damascus when something strange happened. A bright light filled up the sky. It was so bright that Saul could not see anything. Then Saul heard a voice coming out of the light. The voice said, "Saul! Saul! Why are you hurting me?"

Who was talking to him? Saul didn't know, so he asked, "Who are you?"

The voice said, "I am Jesus. What you've been doing is hurting me. When you go to the city, wait there and I will send someone to help you."

Then the light and the voice went away. When Saul tried to get moving again, he found that he could not see anymore. Some of the people in his travel group had to lead him by the hand into town.

Then Saul waited. And waited. He waited in a house for three days--count with me: 1, 2, 3 days!--and still couldn't see at all. While he waited he thought about what had happened. Saul had met Jesus! Jesus' friends hadn't been lying at all! They were telling the truth. Jesus really was God's son. Saul realized he had made a big, big, big mistake. He was sorry he had not believed them and sorry he had hurt them and Jesus.

There was another man in the city. His name was Ananias. Say that with me: an-a-nai-is. We're going to call him Ani. Ani loved Jesus very much. God said to Ani, "Go and help Saul." This message made Ani nervous and scared. Show me your scared face! Ani felt scared because he knew who Saul was. He knew Saul had come to arrest Jesus' friends. Ani said, "But God, Saul is not a nice man. He wants to arrest me!"

God said, "It's ok. Trust me. I've shown him the truth about Jesus."

So Ani got up and found the house where Saul was waiting. Ani said to Saul, "Jesus sent me to help you. The same Jesus from the road. He sent me to help you see again."

Ani put his hands on Saul's eyes and Saul could see again! Saul was happy that he could see. Saul knew that Jesus' friends were telling the truth and wanted to trust and follow God. So Saul stayed in Damascus with Ani and other people who loved Jesus. He learned more about Jesus from them. Instead of arresting them, he became friends with them. Then, Saul started telling everyone about Jesus. He wanted everyone to know that Jesus was God's son.

STORY: ELEMENTARY

Saul has spent his whole life following God. Everything that included--learning about the Bible, being in groups that also followed God, even leading them!--he did it. He knew God well.

Which is why when he got wind of this group called The Way, and their message that God was saving the world through Jesus, was very concerned. Jesus was that troublemaker killed by Rome, who had made incredible claims about being sent from God and bringing life through himself. But anyone who actually followed God would know that only God can bring life.

No, this Way was not a way to life, it was a way to trouble, to chaos, to death. And it needed to be stopped.

So Saul got permission to go after these people himself. And now it was off to Damascus. The synagogue leaders had given him the OK to find and tie up any of these people, and bring them back to Jerusalem.

He wasn't too far off when the trip was brought to a sudden stop by a light so intense, that instead of lighting things up, it was impossible to see at all! Saul fell right down to the ground. Then he heard a voice. "Saul, Saul, why are you coming after me to harm me?"

"Harm you? Who even are you?"

"I'm Jesus, of Nazareth, the one you are seeking out, hurting, attacking. Instead, get up and go to the city and wait there. You'll be told what to do next."

Saul hadn't been traveling alone, and everyone with him had heard the voice as well, but no one had seen a speaker. And it was a good thing he traveled in a group, because when he stood back up from the ground, he opened his eyes and saw...nothing. So the men with him helped guide him the rest of the way.

For three days Saul waited in Damascus.

Meanwhile, in a different part of town, a man named Ananias heard God's Spirit say, "Go find a man named Saul. He's already seen a vision of you coming to put your hands on him and make him see again."

"Saul, like Saul, Saul? Like, the man who hurt so many of your people in Jerusalem and came here entirely so that he could tie us up too?"

"Just go. I've picked him to help others know me far and wide. I've even shown him how hard saying yes to me will be."

Ananias set off for the house where Saul was.

Pause and ask: what do you think he's thinking about or feeling on the walk over?

When he arrived, he placed his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul," he said, "Jesus has sent me—yes, Jesus, who appeared to you on the road—so that you may be able to see again, and receive God's Spirit."

Something like scales fell off of Saul's eyes, and he could see again. And he got up, found water, and was baptized. He joined with Jesus' followers, and especially helped non-Jewish people hear God's story and know they were invited to join in.

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WONDER QUESTIONS

1. I wonder what Saul thought about during his three days waiting in Damascus?
2. I wonder if it was easy or hard for Ananias to go to Saul?
3. I wonder what the scales that fell off Saul's eyes were like?

Key Question: Every Bible story tells us something about who God is or what God's like. What did you notice this time?

ACTIVITIES

Play Follow the Leader:

Say, Saul needed to be led to the city because he could not see.

Grab my hand and see where I lead you!

Play "Red light, green light" with a story layer

Green Light: Say, Saul said, "I'll go get them!" - start to walk to me.

Red Light: say, Jesus said, "Stop!" - freeze

Play until kids reach you, then say, "After Jesus said stop, he said, "You are hurting me and my friends. Go to the city for help. And Ananias came to help Saul, who changed and trusted Jesus forever!"

Flashlight Freeze

For this game you'll need a dark room, music, and a flashlight. If the only room that gets dark in your house is a bathroom, try it out. The squishy space could make it really silly. In a dark(ish) room, turn music on and dance around.

Have the flashlight holder slowly move the flashlight beam around the room.

Whenever the beam hits someone, they freeze in place until it moves along. If they move, they're out, and sit down until you call everyone back in. (Tip: don't let kids be out too long.)

CRAFT:

"Saul's Vision Change" Sunglasses

Kids decorate sunglasses to represent Saul not being able to see clearly—and then connect it to how Jesus helped him "see" in a new way.

Supplies

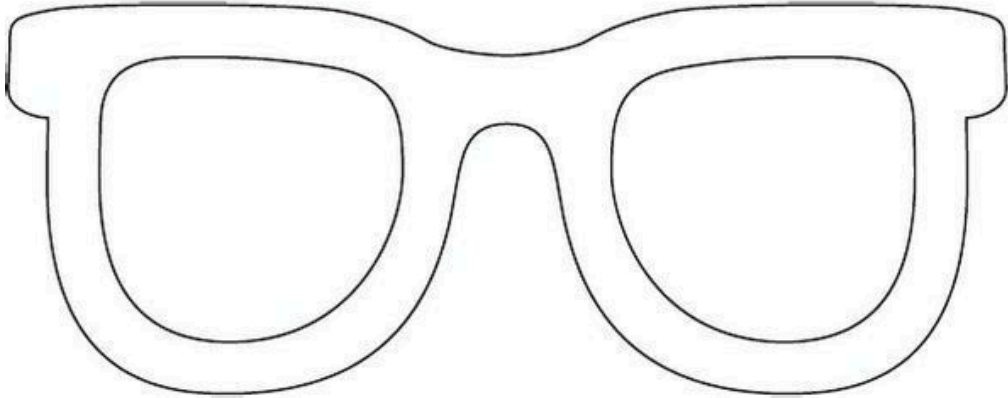
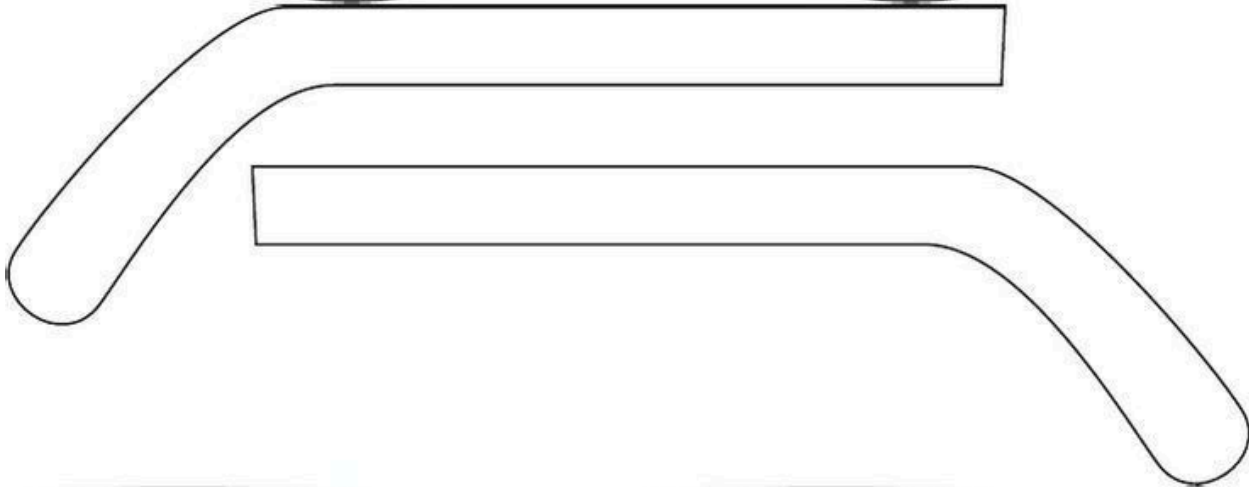
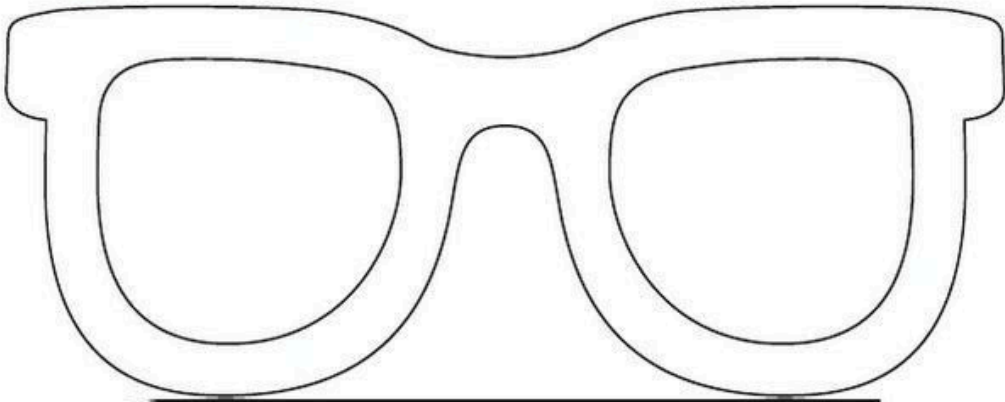
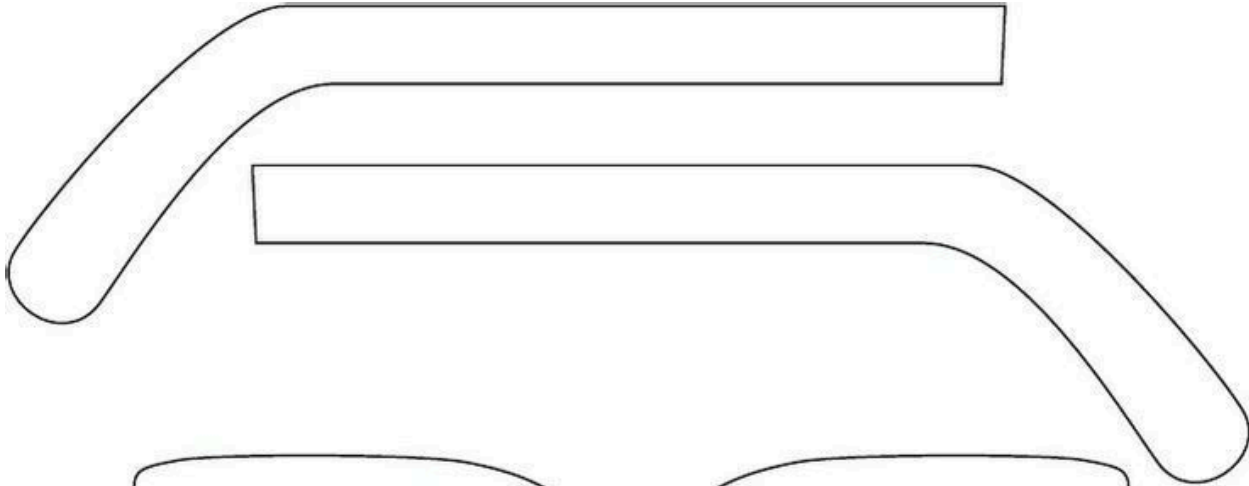
- Cheap plastic sunglasses (or paper cut-out "glasses" if needed)
- Stickers, foam shapes, gems
- Markers or paint pens
- Tissue paper
- Tape or glue

Kids decorate the sunglasses however they like (fun, colorful, sparkly).

Add the "blindness" effect by lightly tape tissue paper over the lenses or use washable paint/marker to make them cloudy. When kids put them on, their vision is blurred—just like Saul's!

Optional Twist: Make it a before-and-after craft:

- One lens = cloudy (before meeting Jesus)
- One lens = clear (after transformation)



PRAYER PRACTICE:

A Confession Practice for Kids. For each thing you say, hop in one direction. Be sure that as the adult, you hop too. This should feel simple and honest. The practice of confession is simply about telling the truth. It rests on the sure foundation of God's infinite compassion, patience, understanding and forgiveness. So there's no need for shame.

Sometimes we do things we know we shouldn't.

We say unkind things (hop),
try to only get our way (hop),
hit (hop),
yell (hop),
or lie (hop).

You promise we can always tell you the truth about things we do but shouldn't. You are full of love, kindness and forgiveness. We never need to hide from you. Turn us back to you.

May we keep practicing speaking in kindness (hop),
compromising (hop),
being gentle with our bodies (hop),
gentle with our voices (hop),
and being truthful (hop).

Thank you that we can always be honest about not being perfect. You are always holding us in love and growing us in love. Amen.