I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.

John 8:12
(NIV 1984)
What was God’s plan for Saul, the persecutor of the Christians?

God changed Saul into an apostle and a missionary, especially to the Gentiles.

Application: God changed us into believers, and he wants us to spread his Word to all nations.

Response: We thank God for the gift of faith by sharing his Word with others.

Lesson Summary: As Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, God changed him into a believer. Temporarily blinded, Saul waited in Damascus until Ananias restored his sight and baptized him. The church enjoyed a time of peace and growth, chiefly because God had changed Saul into an apostle and a missionary, especially to the Gentiles.

* Matthew 28:19
* 1 Timothy 2:3,4
* The Third Commandment
* The Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer
* Hymn 573:1,2,4


Dearest Lord Jesus, thank you for changing me into a believer. May the students and I boldly spread your Word, trusting that it has power to change all people into believers. Amen.
Sing: Sing “I Hear the Savior Calling” (hymn 560:1,3,5). Jesus calls us to serve him by sharing the gospel message with others.

Pray: Dear God, you have called us to spread the saving message of your Word to those who have not yet heard it. We know that the gospel can change hearts and lives. Give us the courage to share it with others. Amen.

WORSHIP

The Best Plans

Have the students give examples of things we use to keep track of our plans. [Calendar, daily planner, appointment book, sticky notes.] Ask,

“Do the plans you make always work out?” [No.]

Ask the students to think of examples of times their plans didn’t work out, and allow them to share their examples with partners, or allow a few students to share their examples with the class. Point out that no matter how organized we are, often our plans don’t work out.

After Stephen was put to death, Saul’s plan was to persecute the Christians and destroy this new church. But Saul’s plan did not work out because God had a completely different plan for Saul. Today we’ll answer the question, What was God’s plan for Saul, the persecutor of the Christians?
 Acts 9:1-5

1. Damascus was about 150 miles from Jerusalem. What does this tell you about Saul? [Saul was very dedicated in his persecution of Christians, even traveling long distances to do so.]

2. Finish the following poem to describe what happened to Saul on the road to Damascus (verses 3-5).

Saul persecuted Christians day and [night].
Until on the road he [saw a light].
He fell to the [ground] when the light he did see,
A voice said, “Saul, [why do you persecute me?]”
“[Who are you, Lord?]” was Saul’s loud cry.
“[I am Jesus],” came the reply.

KEY POINT How did Saul come to faith in Jesus?

As Saul traveled to [Damascus], Jesus showed him that he really was the Son of [God].

Coming to Faith

Saul’s conversion—with the bright light, the voice, and the blindness—was a very dramatic event for him. Look at how the following people were brought to faith:

- God used a bright light and the words of Jesus to convert Saul.
- Makayla was brought by her parents to be baptized with water and the Word.
- Andy visited a church, heard God’s Word, and eventually joined the church.

How were these conversions different? [The place where it happened, the people’s ages, and the time in history are all different.]

What was the same as these three people came to faith? [They were brought to faith through the power of God’s Word.]

How did you come to faith? [Answers will vary but should involve God’s Word.]
Ask each student to fill in one thought bubble under God’s Word 2, item 3. Then allow the students to check with other students for ideas to fill in the other two thought bubbles.

Ask the students to examine what Ananias said in 9:13,14. Have them rewrite it in their own words. [God, I’ve heard about Saul and all the bad things he did to the people in Jerusalem. I heard he came here to arrest us too!]

Have the students rewrite the incorrect statements from God’s Word 2, item 5. [Something like scales fell off Saul’s eyes and he could see again. Ananias told Saul that Jesus had sent him. Saul was to witness what he had seen and heard to all people. Saul got up and was baptized.]

We can understand why Ananias would be hesitant to speak with Saul. How did Jesus reassure him? [Jesus told Ananias that he had specifically chosen Saul to be his messenger to the Gentiles, their kings, and all of Israel.]


[X] Ananias placed his hands on Saul.

Saul washed in the Jordan seven times, and he could see again.

Ananias told Saul that Peter had sent him.

[Saul learned that God had chosen him.

Saul was to witness what he had seen and heard only to the Jews.

Saul got up and baptized Ananias.

What did Ananias tell Saul about God’s plan for him?

[Ananias] told Saul that God had chosen him to be an [apostle].
God changed us into believers through the power of his Word. God chose Saul to be an apostle. He has also chosen us. Look at the statements below.

If the statement applies to Saul, color it yellow.
If the statement applies to you, color it blue.
If the statement applies to both you and Saul, color it green.

- Chosen by God [Green]
- Chosen to be an apostle [Yellow]
- Chosen to declare God's praises [Green]
- Chosen to preach to the Gentiles of the first century [Yellow]
- Chosen to do good works [Green]
- Chosen to spread God's Word in the 21st century [Blue]


6. Saul had persecuted Christians; now he himself was being persecuted. Give one example of this. [The Jews in Damascus kept watch on the city gates in order to kill Saul. (Or, the Hellenistic Jews/Hellenists in Jerusalem tried to kill Saul.)]

Explain that the Hellenistic Jews/Hellenists were Jews who embraced the Greek language and culture.
Read Acts 9:31. Discuss whether any of these statements apply to your church.

Saying Thanks
Ask the students to look up Jeremiah 29:11. What does that passage say about our lives? [God has a plan for our lives. He gives us hope and a future.]

How can we, like Saul, thank God for the faith he has given us? [We can look for opportunities to serve him and spread his Word.]

Challenge the students to find at least one person to talk to about Jesus in the next week. Allow them a moment to pray silently for God’s help to do so.

God had blessed the church by sending Saul to spread the gospel to the Gentiles and all people. What other blessings did God send the new church? Underline all sentences that are correct:

- The church enjoyed a time of peace.
- It was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.
- It grew in numbers.
- It lived in the fear of the Lord.

[Underline all four sentences.]

**KEY POINT** As an apostle and God’s chosen instrument, what did Saul do?

Saul no longer persecuted the **Christians** but preached fearlessly, especially to the **Gentiles**.

**WORD TODAY** Different Missionaries

Because God has brought us to faith, we want to thank him by telling others all he has done. Though we can’t all be fearless preachers like Saul, we can all do mission work.

Circle one italicized phrase in the following question, and then answer that question:

How can you use your voice, your hands, your feet to be a missionary?

[Answers will vary. Examples: We can be missionaries by praying for the spread of the gospel, encouraging one another, giving money to missions, telling others about God, praising God for bringing many to faith, studying his Word so that we’re prepared to tell others, becoming a teacher or missionary, sending cards to missionaries, etc.]
Aim: What was God's plan for Saul, the persecutor of the Christians?

Truth: [God] changed Saul into an apostle and a missionary, especially to the [Gentiles].

Application: God changed us into [believers], and he wants us to spread his Word to all [nations/people].

Response: We [thank] God for the gift of faith by sharing his [Word] with others.

Whether or not you have the gift to be a public preacher or teacher of God’s Word like Saul, you have gifts you can use to glorify God. Identify two such gifts that you have. Then ask a parent to identify two gifts you can use to glorify God. Are they the same?

Student
1. _________________________
2. _________________________

Parent
1. _________________________
2. _________________________

Student's initials: ____ Parent's initials: _____

CLOSE

You will need a daily planner or appointment book.

Show the students the planner or appointment book. Ask them what often happens to the plans you write down. [They don't work out.] Then show a Bible. Point out that we can see in the Bible how God always carries out his plans. His plan for Saul changed him into a believer. Through the gospel, he has changed us into believers as well.

Pray: Lord God of grace, you changed Saul the persecutor into a humble believer. Thank you for changing us into believers through the gospel. Make us faithful missionaries who gladly speak about you and your Word to others. Amen.
Lesson Activities

1. Review

One Good Answer Depends on Another!

* Matthew 28:19

* 1 Timothy 2:3,4

**Purpose:** Students will review the lesson by completing sentences.

**Procedure:** Have each student complete Copy Master 1. The answers are as follows:


How does God’s kingdom come?

God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

* Hymn 573:1,2,4

For hymn texts, use the hymnal or the electronic memory treasure files for your grade level.

Memory Treasures Exercises

- How does 1 Timothy 2:3,4 explain why God called Saul to be an apostle? [It says God wants all people to be saved. This would include a former persecutor and all the Gentiles.]
- Read the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer and its meaning. How did God use Saul to make his “kingdom come”? [After his conversion, Saul would preach the Word so that God’s kingdom would come to many people.]

Talk Show

* Purpose:* Students will review the lesson while participating in an imaginary talk show.

* Procedure:* Tell the students that four guests will appear on your classroom talk show: Ananias, Barnabas, a temple guard who accompanied Saul to Damascus, and a Christian from Damascus who was on Saul’s arrest list. Have the students write questions they would like to ask these people. Choose four students to play the four characters. While the others write questions, they should study so that they know exactly what role they played in the lesson and how they will answer the questions.
When the students are ready, use a makeshift microphone and act as the talk show host, going around the classroom and allowing students to ask their questions of the guests.

2. Application

Gifts to Share the Gospel

*Purpose:* Students will see that God has given each of us gifts that can be used to spread his Word.

*Procedure:* Have the students complete **Copy Master 2.** They should read the descriptions of people and identify how each could use his or her individual gifts to spread God’s Word now or in the future.

[Answers will vary. Example for 1: Ian can tell his friends and neighbors about Jesus. Ian could study to become a pastor when he grows up.]

Law and Gospel Search

*Purpose:* Students will see the importance of both law and gospel.

*Procedure:* Ask your pastor for a copy of a sermon in which the law and gospel are easily found. Tell the students that Jesus’ message that he was the one Saul was persecuting was both law and gospel. Law and gospel are the Bible’s two main teachings, and most sermons contain both. Then give them a copy of your pastor’s sermon and have them find those parts that are law and those that are gospel. This may also be done while listening to a sermon during church.

3. Music

*It All Starts With Jesus*

*Purpose:* Students will learn a song with which we pray that Jesus would use us to serve him.

*Procedure:* Teach the students to sing “It All Starts With Jesus” (**Copy Masters 3.1 and 3.2**).

4. Art

**Teach All Nations**

*Purpose:* Students will decorate a cross with stamps to be reminded that God wants us to go to all nations.

*Procedure:* Buy a bag of used stamps (foreign stamps if possible) at your local variety or hobby store. Divide them up among the students. Have the students cut them in half diagonally and put them aside. Then have the students cut a cross out of colored construction paper and glue the stamp halves all over the cross until no construction paper shows. Hang the postage-stamp crosses in the hallway under the words “Teach All Nations!” (**Alternative:** Glue pictures from magazines of people from all races to the crosses—or glue country shapes or flags from around the world.)

5. Writing

**Go and Make Disciples**

*Purpose:* Students will explore ways to share Jesus as their Savior.

*Procedure:* Have the students write the text of Matthew 28:19 on the top of a piece of paper. Then have them write the following:

- The name of a person they know who does not seem to know Jesus as his or her Savior
- The reasons they would like to share the good news of Jesus with this person
- The opportunities they have or could create to share the good news with him or her

Share the writings as a class. You will find that the reasons to share the good news are the same: so that the person receives forgiveness of sins, peace, and eternal salvation. The opportunities to share the gospel may be very different and creative. A discussion will help inspire the students to carry out their ideas.
6. Bible Study

“Helping” God

Purpose: Students will see that God’s plans are always good.

Procedure: Explain that Saul had thought that he was helping God by ridding the world of Christians. But Saul was actually fighting against God and his church. God’s children often sin as they become impatient and try to “help” God. Have the students work in small groups on the following Bible passages. They should write down who tried to help God, how he or she tried to help God, and why it was wrong.

Genesis 25:21-23 and 27:1-13 [Rebekah. She tried to make sure Jacob got the blessing God intended him to have. She sinned by deceiving her husband. She also did not trust that God could carry out his own plan.]

Matthew 16:21-23 [Peter. He tried to deter Jesus from suffering and dying. Peter was tempting Jesus to turn from his work of saving sinners.]

Galatians 3:1-5 [The Galatians. They were trying to obtain God’s favor by obeying the law. The Galatians were trusting in themselves instead of clinging in faith to Jesus—the one who earned salvation for them.]

Who Needs to Hear the Gospel?

Copy Masters 4.1-4.4 contain an age-appropriate, theme-related Bible study. Use it as an additional classroom activity, or encourage parents to conduct this Bible study with their children at home. The Bible studies are from the original Christ-Light (© 1998) and use the 1984 edition of the New International Version Bible translation.