**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 4 of 4

# Saul and Jesus

### MEETING AIM

To understand how meeting Jesus changes lives, and the world.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 7:54-8:3; 9:1-31

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

In this session we learn about Saul’s conversion: a key moment in the New Testament! Use this session to explore the impact that his conversion had on him and the early Church, and to remember how seeing Jesus more clearly can still change us and our world today!

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and ask the children to share about the week they have had. Ask the group: “Have you ever known someone who did something really unexpected that changed the way that you thought about them?” You might use an example from your own life.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper; pen

Play a game of empire with the group. The rules are as follows:

Everyone chooses a name for themselves. It can be anything – a made-up name, a name of a celebrity, a name of a Bible character. One by one they have to come and tell you their name so that you can write it down on a list, without telling the others what it is. Once you have all the names, read them back to the group in a random order.

Then invite someone to start guessing who is which name. They have to ask a member of the group: “Are you [name]?” If they are right, that person has to join their ‘empire’ and the same person gets another turn at guessing someone else. If they are wrong, the turn to guess passes on to the person that they asked. Gradually, a few ‘empires’ are built up. Once someone has an empire, you can acquire the whole of their empire if you guess their name correctly and then the names of all the people in their empire (which is easier once they have already been guessed correctly!). The game ends when someone has got everybody in their empire.

Depending on time you might want to play more than one round of this. However, you could say that you’ll play another round at the end if there’s time after covering everything else.

Explain that there are some links to the theme of the session today. One of them is about changing names, and the other is about going from being an opposition to ‘one of your team’.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of Acts 9:1-19; highlighter pens; Bible; sunglasses; a torch

Before the session, highlight the words spoken by Saul, Jesus and Ananias in different colours on the copies of Acts 9:1-19.

Ask for three volunteers to be Saul, Jesus and Ananias. Give the torch to someone to represent the blinding light (but remind that person not to actually shine the light in Saul’s eyes). Give out the copies of the Bible passage and ask your volunteers to speak their lines as you read out the verses. Put the sunglasses on Saul to represent him being blind.

Use the Bible to continue to read the passage up to verse 31. Explain that later on in the book of Acts we find out that Saul starts to use his Roman name Paul, and that Paul became one of the key figures in building the early Church and spreading the good news about Jesus, writing many letters to the first churches that today we read as books in the Bible.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* Why do you think Saul hated the Christians so much?
* How did Saul’s encounter with Jesus change him?
* How do you think the Christians would have felt about Saul joining their group?
* How do you think the Jewish community that Saul was a part of would have felt about him becoming a Christian?
* How do you think people might have reacted to Saul preaching about Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** lightbulbs (or pictures of them); luggage tags; pens

In the book of Romans 12:2, Paul writes: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Of course, Paul would know a lot about being transformed by the renewing of our mind. Paul knew that meeting Jesus would change the way that we think about things. Jesus changed Paul’s hate to hope, his enemies became friends, and the direction that he thought his life was going in changed in more ways than one! Today, we still need to let Jesus change us by renewing our thoughts and ideas: to love where we might hate, to have faith where we might be scared and to see friends where we might see enemies.

Give each group member a lightbulb, a luggage tag and a pen. Invite them to write the sentence from Romans 12:2 on the luggage label, and then tie it to the base of the lightbulb. Explain that the lightbulb symbolises the moment where Jesus’ light shone on Saul and everything changed for him.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** lightbulbs from ‘Creative time’

Use these lightbulbs as an aid to helping you pray. Begin a time of prayer and ask each of the group members to hold their lightbulbs and invite God to continue to renew their minds as you pray:

Dear God, thank you that you changed Saul from an enemy to a friend. Thank you that you gave him new eyes to see, and help us see with those new eyes too. Change the parts of us that hate to parts that love. Help the parts of us that are scared to have faith. And help us to love our enemies, to the point that we may even be surprised by finding you in them! Amen.

Invite the group to (carefully) take their lightbulbs home and put them somewhere that will be a daily reminder of a prayer that God would continue to renew our minds and see the world through new eyes.

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