

The Early Church: On the Road to Damascus*

Lesson 4

LESSON OVERVIEW

Key Point: God has a call for you.

Repeat this phrase throughout the lesson.

Bible Story: Acts 9:1-19

Challenge Verse: Acts 4:12—“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

ITEMS NEEDED

Each class needs the following:

Enough name labels for each student to have one—However, these labels don't all say the same thing. They say three different names: Stephen, Saul, Ananias

Signs (one for each class) that say: *Saul, Stephen, Godly Man, Loved Jesus, Didn't Believe, Wanted to Stop Them, Killed the Christians*

4 small bags for each class that contain the letters A, C, T, S, 4:, 1, 2—This is for the 3rd-5th classes only.

4 copies of the “Which books did Paul write?” page

A small bag of candy for each class—with enough candy for the entire class.

Bible Verse Poster (Kindergarten and 1st grade have a shorter version)

BEFORE CLASS

- Put up the Bible Verse Poster for today.
- Set out any items you need for today's lesson
- Pray for each student by name.

AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

- Greet each student by name as they enter.
- Give each student an attendance sticker for the attendance chart, and feel free to add guest names to the chart. This will give them a sense of belonging.
- Get to know any guests and help them fill out a guest form.
- Be sure to smile—Your smile and attitude sets the atmosphere as students enter.

OPENING ACTIVITY

When students enter, give each a label that says either Stephen, Saul, or Ananias. Then tell them you are going to play a quick game that is a lot like Simon Says. If you say, “Stephen says,” only those with the Stephen tags should do it. If you say, “Saul says,” only those with the Saul tags should do it. If you say, “Ananias says,” only those with the Ananias tags should do it. Have your students stand up and get ready.

Saul says: Raise your hands
Stephen says: Stand on one leg
Ananias says: Jump up and down where you are
Saul says: Touch your head
Ananias says: Stop jumping and touch your ears
Stephen says: Jump up and down where you are
Saul says: Touch your toes
Stephen says: Stop Jumping and touch your nose
Saul says: Put your hands in the air.
Ananias says: Touch your knees
Saul says: Put your hands down.
Stephen says: Repeat after me, “God’s got a call”
Ananias says: Repeat after me, “For us all.”
Saul says: Repeat after me, “God’s got a call for us all.”
Stephen says: Clap your hands six times
Ananias says: Clap your hands three times behind your head
Saul says: Give someone a high-five
Stephen says: Sit down in a chair
Ananias says: Sit down in a chair.
Saul says: Sit down in a chair.

SAY: Today we’re going to learn about three men for whom God had special plans and how they all said YES to Jesus.

Control Tool

Anytime you say, “God’s got a call,” students should shout back, “For us all.” Feel free to have a boys vs. girls or a side vs. side competition to see who can say it the loudest. And remember that students are going to mimic how you say it—so be excited that “God’s got a call for us all!”

Control Tool

Leader: *God’s got a call* / Students: *For us all!*

BIBLE LESSON—part 1

Bible Story #1--Stephen

Choose 2 volunteers to help you tell a story. Give one the sign that says *Saul* and the other the sign that says *Stephen*.

SAY: Stephen was a godly man (put *Godly Man* sign around his neck) who loved Jesus (put *Loved Jesus* sign on him) and told others about Him. But since the religious leaders had killed Jesus, they didn't want people preaching about Him. So in anger they drove Stephen out of the city and began to throw big stones at him.

SAY: Finally Stephen fell to his knees. (*Have volunteer act it out and say the following...*) and said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Then he died.

SAY: The people who killed Stephen laid their garments at Saul's feet, which meant he was in charge. Saul had killed Stephen for preaching the truth about Jesus and in a minute we're going to see what happens to him. Give our volunteers a hand. (*Take the signs back.*)

Ask the students: **Why do you think Stephen was willing to die for Jesus?** (Answer: Because he had found something so awesome in Jesus that he wasn't willing to let go of it, even if it cost him his life.)

LESSON ACTIVITY

Toe Tag

Choose 1 volunteer to help you demonstrate toe tag.

SAY: In a minute we are going to play toe tag. This is how you play. Take hold of each other's hands. Then you will try to use either foot to tag the top of their foot. The bottom doesn't count and neither does the ankle. You must tag the top of their foot. The first person to tag their partner 3 times wins. After you have played with one person, find someone else to play against. Everyone find a partner and begin playing. (*Teachers can play too, especially if your class has an odd number. Also, help students settle any controversies they may have about who tagged who. Keep this game moving fast and cut the time off after about 4 minutes of play.*)

SAY: Everybody freeze. On the count of three, as fast as you can, come sit down in a circle. 1-2-3! (*Compliment the first one there as well as the most considerate person, etc....whatever sticks out to you.*)

Ask the students: The aim of the game was to tag the other person's foot. **What was Stephen's aim in life?** (Answer: To live for Jesus and tell others about Him.)

Ask the students: Don't answer this out loud—**But what's your aim in life?
What are you living for?**

SAY: If it's soccer...then you've missed the boat.
If it's to be popular or well-liked...then you've bought a lie.
If it's to be the best or make money or have a lot of stuff...then you'll find your life will be empty.

Ask the students: **What did you bring into the world when you were born?** (Answer: Nothing.)

Ask the students: **What will you take with you when you die?** (Answer: Nothing except your relationship with Jesus. Jesus is what really matters in life.)

SAY: Not only is Jesus what really matters in life, but He also has a special “call” or plan for everyone. He made you for a reason and His plan for you begins when you give your life to Him.

CHALLENGE VERSE

Spell-It-Out

Quickly split your class into four groups.

(3rd-5th Grade Only) SAY: I am going to give each group four letters and three numbers that represent something important today. You will have one minute to put them in the right order. (Hand out the four bags that contain the letters A, C, T, S, 4:, 1, 2.)

SAY: While I read Acts 4:12, count how many times I say the word “no.”

Ask the students: **How many times did I say “no”?** (Answer: 2)

SAY: There is only one way to be saved and go to heaven that that’s by saying YES to Jesus and giving your life to Him. Now let’s see what happened to Saul.

BIBLE LESSON—part 2

Bible Story #2--Saul

Choose 1 volunteer to be Saul. Give him/her the *Saul* sign.

SAY: Saul didn’t believe that Jesus was God’s Son (give him the *Didn’t Believe* sign). He thought they were wrong and were spreading lies. He wanted to stop them (give him the *Wanted to Stop Them* sign), and he even killed Christians like Stephen (give him the *Killed Christians* sign).

SAY: But one day Saul was on the way to Damascus to arrest some Christians when a light from heaven flashed around him, and he fell to the ground.

(Have the volunteer act this out.)

Then he heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” *(Have the volunteer repeat this.)*

And the voice said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise, enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.”

When he got up, he was blind. For three days he didn’t eat or drink until a Christian named Ananias came to him and told him about Jesus. Then Saul gave his life to Christ and immediately his sight came back.

Illustration: 180 Degree Turn Around

Using the Saul volunteer.

SAY: Saul was like this: Even though he thought he was going the right way, (*move volunteer one direction*), he wasn't. Then he met Jesus and realized he'd been wrong and gave His life to Christ. Then he turned around (*act this out*) and went the right way (*move the volunteer the opposite way*).

SAY: Saul had done some bad things, but no matter what you've done, the Lord is just waiting for you to say YES to Jesus. There's nothing you can do to make God stop loving you, and the best choice you can make today is to always say YES to Jesus.

Ask the students: So how do you know if it's the right time to give your life to Christ?

Answer—**Two Hand Illustration:**

Two important things must happen before a person can accept Jesus.

Have students hold out one hand, palm up...

- On one hand, you know you have done wrong things...

Have students hold out the other hand, palm up...

- And you know you need a Savior... You need Jesus to forgive you.

SAY: Then it's like there something inside that's saying, "You need to give your life to Jesus." That's when you can know that you're ready.

SAY: When that time comes, talk to someone—never wait to say YES to Jesus.

BIBLE LESSON—part 3*

Bible Story #3--Ananias

SAY: Now let's finish our story.

Tell students that any time you say, "Saul" you want them to say, "Arrest the Christians!"

Anytime you say, "Ananias," they say, "Go, Ananias!"

Practice a few times.

Tell the following story but pause on the bold words:

Saul was a religious leader in Jerusalem. He knew all the rules the Jews had to follow. He obeyed every part of the Law. He had everything going for him—except he hated Jesus and all His followers, the Christians. **Saul** threatened them. **Saul** arrested them. And **Saul** had many of them killed.

You see, **Saul** didn't just dislike Christians. He wanted to get rid of them. So one day he went the high priest and asked permission to hunt down Christians in Damascus, which was a big city in that day. **Saul** took some companions with him, but as they neared Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. The light was brighter than the sun, and it made **Saul** fall to the ground. Then he heard a voice say, "**Saul, Saul**, why do you persecute me?"

He asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise, enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do."

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus, there was a disciple named **Ananias**. The Lord called to him in a vision, “**Ananias!**”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

The Lord told **Ananias**, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named **Saul**, for he is praying.”

“Lord,” **Ananias** answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

But the Lord said to **Ananias**, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument...” In other words, God had great plans for **Saul**’s life—And God has great plans for your life too.

Control Tool

Leader: *God’s got a call / Students: For us all!*

Jesus wanted **Ananias** to go and help Saul who had been a very dangerous man, but God had forgiven **Saul** for all the bad things he had done. An even though **Ananias** was afraid, he obeyed God. He found **Saul** and prayed for him and his sight came back. **Saul** didn’t wait to say “Yes” to Jesus. He was immediately baptized as a Christian and began to tell others about the love of Christ. He later changed his name to Paul and traveled all over spreading the Gospel. He was arrested many times and beaten and shipwrecked, bitten by a poisonous snake, he spent more than one day and night afloat in the sea, and just like Stephen, he was also stoned, although he survived and continue to tell others about Jesus. He preached in front of governors and leaders. God used him to write more than half of the New Testament and Paul (who had been **Saul**) was eventually killed because he was a Christian.

Control Tool

Leader: *God’s got a call / Students: For us all!*

Quickly divide your class into two teams. (Either boys vs. girls or this side vs. that side.) Today you’ll want to keep score on a chalkboard or piece of paper. Give each team 10 points for each correct answer.

What happened to Stephen?

What happened to Saul on the road to Damascus?

Why was he going there?

What did God tell Ananias to do?

Why did this scare him?

What was God’s call for Stephen? (To live for Jesus and share Christ even though the people listening didn’t like it.)

What was God’s call for Saul? (To give his life to Christ and later to share Christ everywhere.)

What was God’s call for Ananias? (To tell Saul about Jesus even though he was a bad man.)

Control Tool

Leader: *God's got a call / Students: For us all!*

Ask the students—**What do you think God has called you to do?**

SAY: God calls everyone to give their lives to Him and like we said earlier, there will be a time in your life when something inside will say, “I need to give my life to Jesus.” When that time comes don’t hesitate to talk to someone.

Ask the students—(And give points in the game for this.) **There are certain things God has called everyone to do. What are some of these?** (Let each team answer several times—Answers might include: God has called everyone to tell others about Jesus, do what is right, be holy, obey their parents, not use bad words, always tell the truth, treat others right, etc.)

SAY: But there are other “callings” God has for you that is just for you. For example, God had called Saul to preach the Gospel in front of governors and leaders, but Stephen and Ananias weren’t given this calling.

Control Tool

Leader: *God's got a call / Students: For us all!*

KEY: God calls some people to be missionaries, pastors, ministers and even minister’s wives, but there are many other callings too—God uses people as teachers and cowboys and farmers and mechanics and even as a President of the United States. God made each of you for a reason and that’s His special calling just for you. But you’ll miss out on it if you don’t follow Jesus every day.

LESSON ACTIVITY

SAY: We’re going to play the “YES” game. Here are the rules. I will take a volunteer and you can tell me either yes or no, but you have to give me your answer *before* I tell you what to do and once you give me your answer, you can’t change it. And here’s a warning, you may not *want* to do everything on my list.

NOTE: Choose a volunteer for each of the following. When someone says no, simply tell them that they’ll never know the plans you had for them and the same is true when people say NO to Jesus. They miss out on the great things He had in store for them.

- *Come up here and get a piece of candy.*
- *Pat someone on the head and say, “You’re so cute!”*
- *Get on your knees in front of someone and say, “Can I have a hundred dollars?”*

- *Come and stand in front of everyone. (Then declare this person to be the Champion of the Day and have everyone clap for them.)*
- *Come up here and get a piece of candy.*
- *Pretend to wipe off someone's shoes with a towel.*
- *Pretend to be a duck.*

SAY: God wants you to say YES to everything He wants you to do. It's like telling Him YES before He tells you what to do, and like Ananias, who wasn't so sure about going to see Saul, you can always trust that His plan is the best plan. And since God's call for your life is what you were made for, although it won't always be easy, it will be the thing you'll love the most when you're walking with Jesus.

Control Tool

Leader: *God's got a call / Students: For us all!*

BIBLE SKILLS

Quickly divide your class into two teams. *(Either boys vs. girls or this side vs. that side or use the same teams as before.)*

SAY: Take a look at the books of the New Testament. *(Refer to your Bible Book Chart)* Saul, who was later called Paul, wrote twelve of them—almost half because there are only twenty-seven books in the New Testament. I am going to give you two minutes to discuss with your team which ones you think he wrote. *(Give each class a “Which Books did Paul Write?” page from the end of this lesson. Tell them to circle the books that they believe he wrote. There are twelve.)*

After two minutes, compare their pages. Tell them that you're going to teach them how they can know which books in the New Testament that Paul (Saul) wrote and that this will play a big part of a competition our class is going to have in two weeks called “The Bible Bowl.”

SAY: Paul wrote all the books from Romans to Philemon. *(Show them on the Bible Book Chart.)* All of these were letters to churches in different towns--That's why they have town names. The book of Romans was written to Christians in Rome. The book of Philippians was written to believers in Philippi. All of these were letters to churches in different towns--except for the last four. These were letters he wrote *to* a young man named Timothy and to a man named Titus and Philemon. These four books are the only ones he wrote that contain a person's name, and these are the only “T”-named books in the New Testament. Philemon, though, is not the only “P”-- There is also 1 & 2 Peter. There are two ways to remember this:

Repeat after me:

*If it's a name with T's or a P's, Paul wrote these.
He was a great leader, but he wasn't named Peter.*

Or you can simply remember *Toilet Paper!* Because the initial to toilet paper is T.P. Just remember that Paul didn't write 1 & 2 Peter. He wrote 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon and all of these books are right next to each other in the Bible.

SAY: All the other “Name” books in the New Testament are the names of the people who wrote them.

Ask the students--**So who do you think wrote Matthew?** (Matthew) / **1 & 2 Peter?** (Peter) / **The Gospel of John?** (John) / **What about 1, 2, & 3 John?** (John--These are letters John wrote to a church.) / **What about Jude?** (Jude)

SAY: So you should be able to tell me who wrote all the books of the New Testament except for three of them.

Quiz the kids pointing at different books on the Bible Book Chart. Remind them that Paul (Saul--who arrested and killed Christians before he came to Christ) wrote all the books from Romans to Philemon.

Ask the students--**What three books have we not talked about?** (Acts, Hebrews, and Revelations)

Ask the students--**Who wrote the Gospel two books before Acts?** (Luke--Luke wrote the book of Acts.)

Ask the students--**Who wrote the letter two books before Revelation?** (John--John wrote the book of Revelation.)

Ask the students--**So who do you think wrote Hebrews?** (They'll probably follow the pattern to look two books before and guess Paul, but the answer is: Although many people believe Paul wrote it or had a hand in writing it, nobody really knows for sure.)

Lesson Discussion

Ask the students--**What was God's call for Stephen? Saul? Ananias?** (Just take answers.)

Ask the students--**How was God's call for them the same?** (He called them all to obey and follow Him no matter the cost.)

Ask the students--**How was God's call for them different?** (Saul [who later changed his name to Paul] shared Christ in front of Romans governors and the emperor. Stephen shared Christ in front of a few religious leaders. Ananias just shared it with Saul. Although one of these might seem like a bigger call than the other, both Stephen and Saul and Ananias were equally faithful to do what God had called them to do. They all said *YES* to Jesus.)

PRAYER TIME & WRAP-UP

Control Tool

Leader: *God's got a call* / Students: *For us all!*

SAY: God has special plans for each one of you. So always say *YES* to everything Jesus wants you to do and you won't miss out on His great plans for your life.

- Take Prayer Request
- Ask if a student would like to pray
- Pray and thank God that He has a plan for all your students' lives.

List Prayer Requests here and on the back of this page.

EXTRA TIME

Use any extra time to help your students memorize the verse for today.

*Adapted from WordAction Publishing Company, VBS 2004 curriculum, "Extreme Team Competitions."



“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:12



“And there is salvation in no
one else.”
Acts 4:12



“And there is salvation in no
one else.”
Acts 4:12

Cut each letter out as shown by the slashes: **A / C / T / S / 4 : / 1 / 2**

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

A C T S 4 : 1 2

Which books did Paul write?

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1st Corinthians

2nd Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1st Thessalonians

2nd Thessalonians

1st Timothy

2nd Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1st Peter

2nd Peter

1st John

2nd John

3rd John

Jude

Revelation