

# 52. Transformation



## BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Acts 9:1-20, Philippians 3:5b-9

Saul is transformed by his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.



## AIMS

To help the children explore the different ways knowing God changes people through looking at Saul's story and reflecting on how God changes people today.

**Saul was determined to stop the message about Jesus from spreading, but then he encountered Jesus for himself on the road to Damascus and he was completely transformed. Coming to know Jesus still changes people's lives today.**



## PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passage for this session and reflect:

- What are the different ways Saul was changed by encountering Jesus?
- How has knowing Jesus changed you?

Take some time to pray for your group.



## GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one or more of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

### ► Change Hate To Love

*You will need: pens or pencils, paper*

Get the children to write the word "hate" at the top of their paper and the word "love" at the bottom. Their challenge is to find a way to transform hate into love by changing one letter at a time to make a new word.

One possible solution is hate, late, lane, lone, love.

This activity could be used to

occupy those who arrive early at the group while they are waiting for the others to join them. The children could either do this individually or in small groups.

### ► Conversion Volleyball

*You will need: volleyball net or a length of string or rope, soft ball (e.g. inflatable beach ball or sponge football)*

Set up the net, or tie or hold the piece of string or rope across the middle of the playing area just above the children's head height. Divide them into two equal teams and get one team to stand on either side of the playing area.

Choose someone to start with the ball and get them to throw it or hit it across the net. The players' aim is to score points by causing the ball to hit the floor on the other team's side

*(continued overleaf)*

of the net and to prevent it from hitting the floor on their own side. If it goes under the net when they hit it, a point is also scored against them.

Let them play a short game (2-3 minutes) and see which team has the winning score.

Then play again, introducing a new rule. This time whenever someone hits the ball, they must duck under the net and join the opposing team. Let them play for a few minutes with this rule and then ask them how they found that version of the game compared to the normal version.

It may have been a bit confusing because people were constantly switching sides. In the part of the Bible we're looking at today we're going to hear about someone who switched sides and how this was also a bit confusing for those around them.

### ► Dress Up Relay

*You will need: set of clothes for each team (e.g. coat, scarf, hat and gloves)*

Divide the children into teams of around five or six. Give each team a set of clothes, or if you have more space, place the set of clothes at the other side of the room opposite the team.

When you give the signal, the first child in each team has to run to the set of clothes if they are at the other side of the room, put on all the clothes supplied, then take them off again and return to their team.

When they have done this, the next child takes a turn. This is repeated until every member of the team has had a turn. The first team to get every member to complete this wins.

### ► Create A Character

*You will need: supply of clothes, props, dressing-up items*

Divide the children into groups of three to five people. Tell them that their challenge is to transform one member of their group into a different character. They can use the props and costumes supplied to do this. Encourage them to come up with a name for their character and a short description of who they are and what they do.

Give them five minutes or so to do this and then get them to share about their character with the other groups.

## EXPLORING THE BIBLE

### ► Recap/ Intro

Last time we talked about how some of the first Christians were persecuted because of their faith. They were beaten, put in prison, or even killed because they followed Jesus. We learned about how Stephen was the first Christian to die for his faith.

### ► Saul's Story

*You will need: pictures printed out from additional document: Saul's Story, Blu-Tack (optional), or equipment to display PowerPoint (from additional document: Saul's Story PowerPoint), Bible*

As you tell the story, use the images to illustrate it, arranging them in three columns: one for what Saul was like before he was changed by Jesus, one for the things that caused him to change, and one for what he was like after putting his faith in Jesus. Depending on the size of your group you could lay the pictures out on a table or stick them up on the wall. Alternatively, you could use the PowerPoint provided, which has the images appearing in the correct order.

**Today we are going to think about a man who was there**

**when Stephen died. His name was Saul.**

**As Stephen was stoned to death, Saul was watching. People took off their cloaks and laid them at Saul's feet while they stoned Stephen and, while Saul didn't join in, he watched, and he agreed with what they were doing to Stephen.**

**Despite the persecution the word about Jesus continued to spread and Saul got more and more angry about this.** (Place angry emoji picture in left-hand column.) **He was a Pharisee, one of the religious leaders, who was proud of working very hard to keep God's law.** (Add "Follow the rules" picture to the left-hand column.) **He believed that was what he had to do to please God and he didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah.** (Add "No" image to left-hand column.)

**He began trying to round up as many of Jesus' followers as he could so that he could have them arrested.** (Add chains image to left-hand column.) **When he heard that some of the Christians had left Jerusalem and gone to Damascus to escape the persecution, he went to the high priest and asked for letters to the leaders in Damascus, asking for their help in rounding up those Christians so that they could be brought back to Jerusalem and put in jail.**

**Saul doesn't sound like a very nice man, but things were about to change...**

**As he got near to Damascus, suddenly there was a bright light from heaven shining on him.** (Place torch image in middle column.) **Saul fell to the ground, and he heard a voice. It said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"** (Add speech bubble to middle column.)

**Who are you?" Saul asked.**

**The voice said, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what to do."**

**Saul got up, and he discovered he was blind! He couldn't see a thing!** (Add closed eyes image to left-hand column.) **The men with him helped to lead him into Damascus and he stayed there for three days. He was still blind and he didn't eat or drink anything.**

**There was a believer in Damascus called Ananias. God spoke to Ananias and told him to go to the house where Saul was staying. Ananias was scared because he had heard about Saul and the way he treated Jesus' followers, but God said, "He is praying to me right now. He is the one I have chosen to take my message to many people."**

**Ananias went to Saul. He prayed for him and Saul was able to see.** (Add praying hands image to middle column and open eyes image to right-hand column opposite the closed eyes image.)

**It was an amazing transformation. Not only was Saul able to see physically but he was also able to see who Jesus was. Before, he had been blind to the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but now he believed it was true!**

**Instead of being against Jesus, he was for Jesus.** (Add "Yes" image to right-hand column opposite the "No" image.)

**Instead of being angry with the Christians and the message they were spreading, he was happy because he put his faith in Jesus.** (Add happy emoji to right-hand column opposite the angry emoji.)

**Instead of fighting against the Christians and seeking to have them arrested, he began**

**telling everyone that Jesus was the Messiah.** (Add preaching image to right-hand column opposite the chains.)

**Instead of thinking that the way to please God was by keeping the rules, he understood that the way to please God was by putting his faith in Jesus.** (Add cross image to right-hand column opposite the "Keep the rules" image.)

Explain that later on, Saul wrote a letter in which he explained how his thinking had changed on this, and read from Philippians 3:5b-9. (Be sure to start at the second half of verse 5 to avoid the distraction of having to answer questions about circumcision!)



## REFLECT & RESPOND

### ▶ Reflection/ Discussion

*You will need: Post-it notes, pens or pencils (optional)*

**It was a dramatic transformation!** Point out to the children that the left-hand column images represent what Saul was like before and the right-hand column images represent what he was like after.

Get them to come up with some words they would use to describe Saul before and after. You could give them Post-it notes and let them write words on them to stick up or lay on the table alongside the images (or either side of the screen if you use the PowerPoint.)

Talk together:

**What was it that caused such a dramatic change in Saul?**

**What do you think your response would have been if you had known Saul before he met Jesus and had seen how**

**much he had changed?**

### ▶ Testimony

*You will need: equipment to play video (optional)*

Christians believe that coming to know God still changes people today. For some people it's a very sudden and dramatic experience like it was for Saul, and for others it happens a lot more slowly and gradually. God works differently in each person's life, and each person who is a Christian has a different story to tell.

If possible, get one or more of the leaders to share a short testimony of how they came to faith in Jesus and how it changed them. If you know that there are a number of children in the group who are Christians you could ask if any of them has anything they would like to share about how Jesus has changed them, but avoid putting them under pressure to share.

Alternatively, you could show this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0xigPxqsrc> which has a series of young people sharing what they were like before and how God changed them. (You may want to start the video at the 26 second mark to skip the introduction.)

For all Christians, it is meant to be an ongoing process of being changed as we get to know God more and follow him more.

### ▶ Prayer Activity

*You will need: magic painting book (colouring books where the colours are revealed when they are painted over with water – you can find these on Amazon or in shops such as The Works or Wilko), paint brushes, containers filled with water*

Give each child a colouring page and a paintbrush and have the water containers within reach in the middle of the table.

Give them a moment to think about how they relate to what they have heard today. Do they know God? If so, how has God changed them? Maybe they are thankful that God has changed them, or maybe there is something in themselves that they would like to ask God to change – e.g. to help them be kinder or more patient. Maybe they want to understand more about who God is.

Encourage them to bring those prayers to God silently as they dip their paintbrush in water and use it to colour their picture. Then lead them in prayer to close. You can let them take their pictures home as a reminder of what they have learned.

### ▶ **Scratch Art**

*You will need: scratch art sheets with scratch tool (you can find these at Baker Ross or on Amazon by searching for “scratch art” - there are various options available such as doodle sheets, bookmarks, or crosses). An alternative is to make your own scratch art sheets – you can find instructions here: <https://www.creativeramblingsblog.com/scratch-art-paper/>*

Give the children a scratch art sheet and tool each. Lead them in the prayer activity above, but as an alternative to the magic painting, let them draw or write something on their scratch art sheet to remind them of what they have been learning.