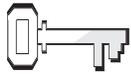


Struck by the Light



References

Acts 9:1-9; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112-121; *Early Writings*, pp. 200-202



Memory Verse

"I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV).



Objectives

The children will:
Know that God wants us to see His love.

Feel sure of God's never-ending love.

Respond by praising God for showing us the way to Him.



The Message

God's love is like a light in darkness.

Monthly Theme

God never stops loving us.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

On his way to Damascus to find and imprison Christians, Saul is stopped by a bright light from heaven. Jesus speaks to him and promises a further revelation of what he is to do. Saul is blinded by the light and has to be led into Damascus.

This is a lesson about grace.

Saul was certainly not a typical candidate for a revelation of God's love. Yet isn't that exactly what grace is all about: loving the unlovable, pursuing those who are running in the wrong direction, winning those who are fighting against you? God's grace still overcomes even the most determined resistance. His love and grace light the way to Him.

Teacher Enrichment

"As Saul yielded himself fully to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the mistakes of his life and recognized the far-reaching claims of the law of God. He who had been a proud Pharisee, confident that he was justified by his good works, now bowed before God with the humility and simplicity of a little child, confessing his own unworthiness and pleading the merits of a crucified and risen Savior. Saul longed to come into full harmony and communion with the Father and the Son; and in the intensity of his desire for pardon and acceptance he offered up fervent supplications to the throne of grace" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 119, 120).

Room Decorations

Bulletin board ideas:

Show a map of Paul's first journey and the distance between Damascus and Jerusalem. You may want to have a space where the children can work out a similar distance between two places they know.

Include information on and places where Christians are persecuted today.

Show pictures of Jerusalem and Damascus today.

For room decor, create an indoor scene. Include a table, chair, and a bed roll or mat of some kind.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Going to Damascus</i> B. <i>Lighting the Darkness</i> C. <i>In the Spotlight</i>	none selection of light sources (see activity), paper, pencils bright lamp or spotlight
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> simple offering device relating to the field of mission emphasis none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	Bible-times costumes, bright lamp or spotlight, tape recorder, blindfold nine heart shapes (see p. 140), Bible Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>God's Light of Love</i>	gift-wrap paper, glow-in-the-dark crayons, or fluorescent paper, Bibles, flashlight
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Light a Candle</i>	small candles, 4" x 6" (10 cm x 15 cm), markers, gift-wrap paper, tape, scissors

*Prayer and Praise me be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Listen to last week’s memory verse and encourage the children to share any experiences from last week’s lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

A. Going to Damascus

Say: **Imagine we are going on a journey for a month. We have to eat and sleep on the road because we don’t have enough money for a hotel or restaurant. Each person will say one item we should take, the next person will say one item, plus the first person’s item, until the last person has to say everything that everyone said. Let’s start by saying, “I’m going to Damascus, and I’m going to take a . . .”** Have an adult write down the order of items and help prompt as necessary.

Debriefing

Ask: **Would you like to have to carry all those things with you? What do you like best about making a trip? In today’s story, Saul is on a journey to Damascus. We do not know what he took with him, but we do know why he was going there—to persecute and kill Christians. But God blinded him by a light of love. That’s what today’s message is about:**



GOD’S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Say that with me.

B. Lighting the Darkness

In advance, set all the light sources on a table. Ask the children to look at the lights and rank them, the strongest first and the weakest last.

Debriefing

Look at the different lights and decide which is the strongest and weakest. If possible, darken the room and shine the flashlights/lamps/candles. Ask: **What do we use this for?** Hold up a flashlight. Ask: **How does its light compare with this?** Hold up a birthday cake candle. Say: **Two different lights, for two different purposes. People are like lights. We all shine at different levels, but we all have work to do for Jesus. Jesus had work for Saul, but Saul wasn’t interested. But Jesus loved him anyway and helped him see what was important. And that’s what our message is about.**



GOD’S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- selection of light sources: lamps, different-sized candles, etc.
- paper
- pencils

C. In the Spotlight

In advance, set up a bright lamp so that it will shine on a blank wall creating a spotlight effect. Invite each of the children to stand in the spotlight and answer a simple question. For example: "What did you have for breakfast?" Do not force them if they do not want to participate.

You Need:

- bright lamp or spotlight

Debriefing

Ask: **How did it feel to stand in the spotlight? Is it possible to hide when you are in the spotlight?** (No, there is nowhere to go.) **Saul's life came under God's spotlight, and God did not like what Saul was doing. But He didn't stop loving Saul. God knew Saul's heart, and He helped him see what was important in life. And that's what today's message is about:**



GOD'S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise

Any Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Allow time for sharing from last week's lesson study and review last week's memory verse. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "Psalm 118:24" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 94)
- "Jesus, We Want to Meet" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 95)
- "His Banner Over Me Is Love" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 25)
- "Can You Imagine?" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 29)
- "Bless His Holy Name" (*Sing for Joy*, no. 9)



Mission

Use a story from *Children's Mission*. Emphasize how meeting God changes lives.



Offering

Say: **Some of our offerings this quarter will help people in (name place where offering will go) to learn about God's love.**

You Need:

- simple offering device relating to the field of mission emphasis



Prayer

Have the children stand in a circle. Go around the circle, encouraging as many children as will to complete the sentence "Dear God, Your love provides me with _____." (Ideas: friends, family, joy, food, all I need, etc.) When everyone has had an opportunity to pray this prayer, close by thanking God for always loving us.

2

Bible Lesson

You Need:

- Bible-times costumes
- spotlight or bright lamp
- tape recorder
- blindfold

Experiencing the Story

Characters: Saul, Saul's followers, voice of Jesus

In advance, tape-record the words of Jesus, or have someone stand behind a screen and read them.

Read or tell the story.

[Saul and his followers are walking around the room.] Saul's voice boomed like thunder, and lightning almost seemed to sizzle around him. He was as dangerous as lightning, too. His only goal in life was to search out and stamp out the new Christians.

Saul and his assistants strode purposefully down the road. They were headed for the famous old city of Damascus. They carried official letters that gave them permission to capture Christians and take them back to Jerusalem, where they could be put to death.

The hot noonday sun blazed down on the travelers. But they marched steadily on. They were intent on their mission. They had traveled almost 150 miles in the past few days. And now Damascus was almost within sight.

Then with no warning at all, in the middle of this very ordinary day a beam of light flashed down from heaven. *[Turn on spotlight.]* It was far, far brighter than the noonday sun. The travelers fell to the ground in shock! *[Children fall to the floor.]* Saul stared into the astonishing brightness.

And then Jesus spoke to him. *[Taped voice:]* "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Saul could only stare and whisper, "Who are You, Lord?"

[Taped voice:] "I am Jesus, whom you persecute."

In that moment Saul understood. Jesus really was God. He really was! And He really had risen from the dead, just as the Christians believed.

And Saul understood what Jesus was saying to him: "When you persecute My followers, Saul, you are really persecuting Me!"

Then Saul asked, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

[Taped voice:] "Get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do." And then the light was gone. *[Turn off the light.]*

[Everyone starts to get up, looking dazed.] The men traveling with Saul were speechless. They had certainly seen the light, but they had not seen Jesus. They had heard a noise, but they had not understood Jesus' words. They struggled to their feet, looking at each other, and wondering what had just happened.

Saul looked around too. *[Look around and put hands out in front. Put blindfold on Saul.]* But he couldn't see a thing. He was blind! Absolutely blind! He turned his head from side to side. "I can't see!" he whispered.

Saul's associates took him by the hand. *[One person holds Saul's hands and leads him to a chair.]* They led him down the road to the city. What a strange procession! Only a few minutes before, Saul had been a mighty hunter, out to hunt down and capture every Christian he could find. And now he was being led down the road. Now he was as helpless as a little child. Saul's feet scuffed along through the dust, but he wasn't paying any attention to where he was being led. There was only one thought in his mind. He had seen Jesus! He had really seen Jesus!

Debriefing

Ask: **What was Saul planning to do in Damascus? How did God stop him?**

Who did Saul see in the light?

What was Jesus trying to tell Saul? (He loved him. When Saul hurt others, he was hurting Jesus.) **Let's say our message together:**



GOD'S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

That's right. No matter what Saul did, God never stopped loving him. And He will never stop loving us.

Memory Verse

In advance, write one word of the memory verse on each heart shape (see p. 140).

Mix up the words. Then have the children put them in the right order, using their Bibles to help. Repeat the verse.

Do this twice, then take away one of the hearts. Read the verse, including the missing word. Continue until all the hearts have been removed and the children can repeat the verse.

If you have a large class, you may want to form smaller groups and use more than one set of hearts.

Today's memory verse is: **"I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3).**

You Need:

- nine heart shapes (see p. 140)
- Bible

Bible Study

Say: **Saul's story is told three times in the book of Acts. First it is told by his friend Luke in Acts 9:1-9. Then Saul tells it himself in Acts 22:3-11 when he was arrested by the Roman guards and again in Acts 26:1-20 when he witnesses to King Agrippa. Let's read Acts 9:1-18 and Acts 22:3-16 together and list any differences we find.**

Read and compare the following references:

- Acts 9:1, 2 and Acts 22:3-5
- Acts 9:3, 4 and Acts 22:6, 7
- Acts 9:5-18 and Acts 22:8-16

Say: **Saul gives a few more details when he tells his story. What are they?** Allow time for discussion.

Debriefing

Ask: **Why do you think Saul persecuted the Christians?** (He believed he was doing the right thing.)

Do you think Saul was happy persecuting and killing Christians?

Even if someone doesn't believe as you do, is it right to hurt that person? Why?

Why do you think that seeing Jesus in a vision caused Saul to believe in Him? Why do you think Saul was willing to tell his story to other people? (So they would understand about God's grace and forgiveness.)

Our message today tells us what Saul learned. Let's repeat it together:



GOD'S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

You Need:

- Bibles

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- gift-wrap paper
- glow-in-the-dark crayons or fluorescent paper
- flashlight
- Bibles

God's Light of Love

In advance, write the texts with glow-in-the-dark crayons or on fluorescent paper, if possible, and place them where they can be seen in the darkest part of the room.

Turn out the lights and turn on the flashlight so the children can spot the texts.

Say: **Saul did many bad things.**

What were some of the things we learned about today? (He hunted Christians and put them in prison or had them killed. He tried to stop people from learning about Jesus. He hurt people who believed in Jesus.)

When he met Jesus, all that changed. Why? (God had a special work for him to do. He really saw Jesus for the first time. He finally understood everything he had learned about the Scriptures and Jesus.)

What are some of the things we do wrong? Accept all answers without condemnation. **What should we do about it?** (Ask God and the person concerned to forgive us and help us to change our behavior.)

How can we be sure that God will forgive us? Let's look at the light of God's love and see what He says. Turn off the lights and shine the flashlight on the

texts you wrote earlier. Have the texts read aloud and discuss the meaning of each.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"By grace you have been saved, . . . it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Debriefing

Read aloud Romans 8:38, 39. Ask: **How does it feel to know that nothing can separate you from God?** (good, wonderful, happy, glad)

When you feel sad because you have done something wrong or someone has hurt you, what can you think about? (The gift of God's grace and His never-ending love; God will forgive me if I am truly sorry; I need to forgive those who do wrong to me.) Read and discuss Matthew 6:14. Be sure the children understand the meaning.

Let's say our message together:



GOD'S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

4

Sharing the Lesson

Light a Candle

Give each child a candle, wrapping paper, and a card. On one side of the card have them write *"Grace . . . is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). On the other side, have them write *God's love is like a light in darkness.*

Help the children wrap the candle.

Debriefing

Say: **Grace is like a free gift. You don't deserve it. It is God's special unconditional love to us.**

After Sabbath School today, surprise someone with your free gift of grace. Choose someone who will really

be surprised and give them the candle and card you made. Tell them about today's story and how Saul met Jesus. And tell them God's love is free to anyone who wants it.

Let's say our message together one more time.



**GOD'S LOVE IS LIKE A LIGHT
IN DARKNESS.**

Closing

Stand together in the shape of a heart. Say: **God has all of us in His heart. He loves us very much. Let's thank Him for His love and ask Him to help us in the week ahead.**

You Need:

- small candles
- 4" x 6" (10 cm x 15 cm) cards
- markers
- gift-wrap paper
- tape
- scissors

Struck by the Light

You may have seen a bully in action at school or in your neighborhood. You may have been bullied. Bullies try to make others feel afraid. Saul was like a bully. He got the priests to give him power to arrest new Christians. But God had other plans for Saul.

References

Acts 9:1-9; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112-121; *Early Writings*, pp. 200-202

Memory Verse

"I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3, NIV).

The Message

God's love is like a light in darkness.

Saul's voice boomed like thunder. And lightning almost seemed to sizzle around him. He was as dangerous as lightning, too. His only goal in life was to search out and stamp out the new Christians.

Saul and his assistants strode purposefully down the road. They were headed for the famous old city of Damascus. Official letters they carried gave them permission to capture Christians. Then they would take them back to Jerusalem, where they would be put to death.

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And then Jesus spoke to him. "Saul, Saul," Jesus said, "why do you persecute Me?"

Saul could only stare and whisper, "Who are You, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you persecute," Jesus answered. In that moment, Saul understood. Jesus really was God. He really was! And He really had risen from the dead, just as the Christians believed. And Saul understood what Jesus was saying to him: "When you persecute My followers, Saul, you are really persecuting Me!"

Saul, then asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Jesus answered: "Get up and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do." And then the light was gone.

The men traveling with Saul were speechless. They had certainly seen the light, but they had not seen Jesus. They had heard a noise, but they had not

understood Jesus' words.

They struggled to their feet, looking at each other and wondering about what had just happened.

Saul looked around too. But he couldn't see a thing. He was blind! Absolutely, totally blind! He turned his head from side to side. "I can't see!" he whispered.

Saul's friends took him by the hand. They led him down the road to the city.

What a strange procession! Only a few minutes

before, Saul had been a mighty hunter, eager to hunt down and capture every Christian. And now he was being led down the road like a little child.

Saul's feet scuffed along through the dust. But he wasn't paying any attention to where he was being led. There was only one thought in his mind. He had seen Jesus! He had really seen Jesus!



Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Go for a walk with your family. Pretend you are Saul going toward Damascus. How did Saul walk? Quickly? Slowly? Did he drag his feet?
- Look at a map to see how far it is from Jerusalem to Damascus. In which countries are modern-day Jerusalem and Damascus found?
- Thank God that you can walk in safety.

Sunday

- With your family, read and discuss Acts 9:1-9. Describe the light Saul saw.
- Name all the Bible stories you can think of that involve light.
- Fanfold a piece of paper five times and draw half a heart, aligning the outer edge of the heart with the folded edges of the paper. Cut out the heart without cutting all the way around. Leave about 0.25 inches (1 centimeter) of the outer edge uncut. This is the point where the hearts are attached to each other. Unfold the paper, and you should have a string of five hearts. Make another string of hearts. Write one word of your memory verse on each heart. Open and close your hearts until you know the memory verse. Use this to teach the verse to your family.
- Sing some praise songs, then thank God for His everlasting love.

Monday

- Read and discuss Acts 22:3-11 during family worship. In Bible times it took five to six days to walk from Jerusalem to Damascus. Look at a Bible map. Try to figure out how many miles Saul walked each day. Write the number here.

- Saul was blinded by the light. Try to find your way around a dark room or wear a blindfold for five minutes. Then thank God for your sight.

Tuesday

- With your family, read Matthew 3:13-17 about

another time heaven opened. What happened? Why is it dangerous to look directly at a strong light or the sun?

- Take turns with two people. Have them lead you by the hands. Then you lead them. How easy is it to go along a path? Which was easier—to lead or be led?
- Thank God that He sent His Son to lead us in the right way.
- Remember to review your memory verse each day.

Wednesday

- Read Matthew 18:21-35. What does this tell us about God's attitude toward us when we do something wrong? How much is 70 times 7? Should you really keep count of the number of times you forgive someone?
- Light a candle and talk about ways to share God's grace with others. Sing "This Little Light of Mine" before prayer. Ask God to give you a forgiving spirit.

Thursday

- For worship today, read and discuss John 3:16. Say the verse together. Then tell each person in your family what you love about them.
- Review your memory verse together before prayer. Thank God for His wonderful love for your family.
- Ask your mom if you can bake some heart-shaped cookies to share with your family. Save some for Friday night.

Friday

- During worship, read Acts 9:1-9 again. Act it out with the help of your family. Sing some praise songs before prayer. Then thank God for being with you all this week.
- Talk about your Sabbath plans as you share your cookies with your family.
- Say your memory verse for your family.