

Bible background

Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-3; 9:1-22

Aim of lesson

To help the children understand how and why Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the apostle and devoted follower of Jesus.

Note that infants are often confused between Saul of Tarsus and king Saul and may find the change of name to Paul confusing. As this set of lessons includes the point at which his name is changed (Acts 13:9), it is probably best to use the name 'Paul' throughout. If your school has a rota for teaching you need to agree which name(s) to use.

Preparation required

Borrow a set of 'Playpeople', including horses, from small friends, or a local playgroup or school, or use small figures or animals (maybe made from simple card shapes and coloured, given features by the children at the beginning of the lesson as an introduction to the characters in the story).

Prepare two sets:

- (i) a desert road - sand, rocks, bushes,
- (ii) a house in Damascus with a container for water in it.

Make sure you have a torch that shines brightly.

Draw outlines for big letters and light beams on colourful pages of magazines ready for children to cut (or cut out beforehand).

You will also need a large piece of coloured paper/card, for background, glue and scissors.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Switch on the torch, allowing only a small amount of light; talk about light with the children. Why do we need it? Bright light - when do we see it, use it, dangerous effect on your eyes?
2. Introduce Saul as a man whom God chose to blind! Talk about what kind of man he was, what he did, when he lived and where, and what he did in Jerusalem while Jesus was working there, and after his death, resurrection and ascension. Explain Saul's attitude to the followers of Jesus and what he then set out to do.
3. Explain that God wanted Saul to work for him. Use the playpeople or other figures, and the torch to tell the story of Saul's experience on the way to Damascus, involving the children each with a different figure. Then use the 'house' set to tell the story of Saul's baptism and new beginning.

Alternative activities

1. Have a go at dressing up and role-play.
2. Paint or print (using sponge cut to shape) a large scale picture of the road with the city of Damascus in the background and a bright light shining in the sky. Cut out some figures to stick on.
3. Play a feely bag game - close eyes or blindfold and then try to identify various objects by touch only.
4. Make a poster of the words of Psalm 109:105 - the memory verse below - using colourful cut-out letters from magazines and beams of light from foil/gold paper.

Relevance to the children's lives

Ask the children why God shone the very bright light in Saul's eyes? Did it help Saul to stop what he was doing against God, and start to do what God and Jesus wanted him to do? How does God help people now to turn to him and do what he wants us to do?

Prayer

Thank you LORD God for giving us the Bible, and for being able to learn from it about Saul and how he became a follower of Jesus. As we learn about Jesus, please help us to turn away from doing things that make you sad, and to try to remember and do things that will make you happy.

Verse

'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.' Psalm 119:105.