

## Family Worship Guide – Week 4

### READ

Read Acts 9:1-31

In the book of Acts, Luke tells us that when Stephen was stoned by the Sanhedrin those who witnessed the execution “laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:58), “who approved of his execution” (8:1). Following Stephen’s death we are told that Saul continued to ravage the church and enter house after house dragging off men and women and placing them in prison (8:2). Later, Luke writes that Saul’s hatred for the church was so extreme that he requested letters from the Jerusalem officials that if he found any “who belonged to the Way, either men or women” (9:2) even as far as Damascus (more than 100 miles NE of Jerusalem), he could bring them to Jerusalem to be imprisoned. While traveling north to Damascus to arrest any Christians who might be there, the Lord suddenly met Saul in a dream, blinded him, and changed the course of his life (and human history) forever (9:3-9).

God then instructed a disciple named Ananias to go to Saul and restore his sight (9:10-14). In light of Saul’s past history of persecuting Christians Ananias was obviously very reluctant to follow the Lord’s orders. However, the Lord assured him that Saul was His “chosen instrument” to carry His name “before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (9:15). How amazing that the one who persecuted Christians so violently should now be transformed into God’s “chosen instrument” to carry the gospel “to the end(s) of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

After only a few days with the Christians in Damascus Saul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Understandably, the Jews were amazed and as a result, the former “persecutor” became the “persecuted” as the “Jews plotted to kill him” (9:23). Saul’s disciples, aware of the Jews’ conspiracy, lowered him in a basket outside the city wall. After leaving Damascus Saul came to Jerusalem attempting to join the disciples. As in Damascus, Jews in Jerusalem tried to kill Saul, and for his own protection the “brothers” sent him away to his own country (9:29-30).

#### Questions:

What does this passage teach us about God’s mercy and grace (also note 1 Timothy 1:12-17)?

How did the Jews respond to Saul once he became a follower of Christ? How did Saul treat Christians before becoming one? What does this teach us about the cost of following Jesus?

This passage details the events surrounding Saul’s dramatic conversion. Obviously Saul’s conversion is very unique in a number of different ways, however the reality is every conversion is a gift of grace and miracle of God. So parents, spend some time sharing with your children the events surrounding your own conversion.

**Bottom Line:** God is merciful and gracious even to the most sinful of men.

### PRAY

This week we are concentrating our prayer as a faith family on the unreached people groups in the Middle East. Specifically we ask that you pray for our field partner who works among unreached peoples and for the Brook Hills’ short-term team that is visiting him this week. Our field partner works specifically in a country where 26 of the 35 people groups are unreached. This means there are less than 2% Evangelical Christians among 26 of these particular peoples. The major religion in this country is Islam and proselytizing Muslims is forbidden and illegal. This makes sharing the Gospel very difficult and dangerous for Christians who live there, and those who have come to faith face huge pressure to return to Islam. Approximately 25% of the 2.9 million people in this country are expatriate, comprising the majority of the workforce. Like many countries in the Middle East, oil production is the primary source of revenue. The people of this country appreciate their leader’s provision for the citizens and development of the infrastructure of the country. He has invested the oil wealth of the nation in education and health for the people. Development has come to this country steadily, even though much of the globe is experiencing recession. This presents unique opportunities for Christian professionals and workers to share the Gospel and plant their lives among the unreached. Please be in prayer for our partner as they seek opportunities to share the Gospel and use their platform to establish churches.

## SING

As we consider Saul's conversion this week, Chris Tomlin's version of "I Stand Amazed (How Marvelous)," originally written by Charles H. Gabriel, is our family worship song. In a dramatic display of sovereign power and love, the risen Christ appears to Saul, and he is humbled at God's grace in choosing him. Saul, a persecutor and murderer of Christians, is given mercy from and reconciliation with Almighty God. When we think of such a miraculous event, we may be tempted to marvel at how God only saves some in such a manner. However, the reality is that we are all the same as Saul without Christ: depraved and wicked, enemies of God, destined for ruin. Our salvation by the cross of Christ is no less dramatic or drastic. Just as Saul considered himself the "chief of sinners," we too should see ourselves as the song describes: "condemned, unclean." And just as Saul's life after his conversion was a testimony of his amazement with this sovereign and loving God, our lives should also be characterized by humility and amazement by the cross. Let us sing together of the Gospel, and celebrate his marvelous, wonderful love.

## MEMORIZE

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

## SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God's word and worship Him together.

### Preschool

- Before you begin, find pictures of the metamorphosis of a butterfly that you can show to your preschooler. (<http://www.thebutterflysite.com/life-cycle.shtml>)
- Read Acts 9:31 with your preschooler.
- Show your child the pictures of the caterpillar-to-butterfly transformation. Explain to your child that when God created the caterpillar it was small, hairy and had many legs and was not very pretty. However, God chose the caterpillar and changed it into something very beautiful – a butterfly.
- In the scripture, God chose Saul, too. Saul had chosen to sin and made bad choices and did not follow God. Sin is ugly, just like the caterpillar was ugly. God chose sinful Saul to tell others about Jesus. God forgave Saul's ugly sin and chose Saul to be His special messenger. Just like God changed the caterpillar into the beautiful butterfly, God changes people too!
- Questions: Does God choose people to tell others about Jesus? Yes, anyone who loves Jesus can tell others about Jesus.
- Conclude by re-reading this week's memory verse with your preschooler and praying that God will use you to tell others about Jesus.

### Children

- As a family, reread Acts 9:31.
- Using Legos, Lincoln Logs, or other similar children's building toys, have your children construct a small church building. Then, have them knock over and destroy the building.
- Assist the child and rebuild the church as a family.
- In the beginning of Acts 9, Saul was a hater of God and was committed to tearing down His church. But God was merciful and gracious to Saul. When Saul least deserved it, God gave him a new heart and turned Saul's life completely around.
- Now, Saul was being used by God to build up the church and proclaim the Gospel everywhere he traveled.
- If anyone should have been disqualified from serving Jesus, it was Saul. But God's great grace was far bigger than Saul's past. No sin is too great for God to forgive and no man or woman is too far from God for Him to save them and use for His Kingdom.
- Pray together as a family and thank God that even when we were far from Him and least deserved salvation, He loved us and extended His mercy, grace, and salvation to us through Christ.

### Students

- Reread Acts 7:58-8:3. What can we learn about Saul's life before he came to know Christ?
- Based on what you read earlier, retell Saul's conversion story.
- Reread Acts 9:19-22, 26-31. What can we learn about Saul's life after God saved him?
- A Christ follower's testimony follows this same pattern: what your life was like before Christ, how God saved you, and how God changed you to make you a new person. Parents, take this time to share with your family your conversion story. Give everyone who would like to do so the opportunity to share their own conversion story.
- Discussion: It is probable that many of us do not think we have a conversion story as "drastic" as Saul's, however, it is important to remember the weight and reality of our sins. There is no sin considered better or worse than another by God. All sin separates us from God and deserves His wrath, yet He showed great mercy by sending Christ for our salvation. How does this impact the way you view your own salvation story? Take time to give thanks through prayer for God's great mercy in your lives.
- As a family, reread Acts 9:31.

## Prayer

### Lives/Church

The conversion of Saul (Acts 9) is a remarkable story demonstrating God's absolute sovereignty and Christ's total Lordship. Our lives are God's to spend for God's purposes. Spend some time this week acknowledging Christ's Lordship in every single area of your life (time, finances, career, family, etc.).

### Local

**Focus:** East Lake House

**Local Church:** 6th Avenue Baptist Church, Currently without a pastor

**Monday:** Pray for the relationship between staff and Brook Hill's volunteers to grow and deepen through more consistent interaction.

**Tuesday:** Pray for more Brook Hill's families and individuals to begin serving at East Lake House.

**Wednesday:** Pray for the hearts of the residents to open toward making relationships with volunteers.

**Thursday:** Pray for opportunities for gospel-centered conversations to take place there.

**Friday:** Pray for a new weekly Bible study beginning there soon.

**Saturday:** Pray for Owen Peek (owenpeek@gmail.com) as he leads our people there for wisdom to know how to best build disciple-making relationships.

### Global

**Partner:** This week we are praying for our partner\* in the Middle East.  
*\*Name undisclosed for Security*

**Short Term Teams:** Please pray for our teams in The Middle East, India and Thailand.

**Monday:** Most of the Christian workers in the country work secular jobs. The Gospel is going out in many forms: written word, stories and in media. Pray for television shows, radio shows, and digital media methods that bring the Gospel to the people.

**Tuesday:** Pray for volunteers who come to share their stories and the Gospel. Pray for them to be lead to people of peace who will be used by God to open doors leading to the hearts of the people.

**Wednesday:** Workers often are challenged to balance the long hours of their jobs that give them the resident visas to live in the country with the hours needed for ministry. Pray for workers to be free to minister so that unbelieving people will come to faith.

**Thursday:** Pray for a church planting movement to begin that touches the entire Arab world.

**Friday:** Pray for more professional workers to be called to work in this country. Pray for visas to be available for those who answer the call.

**Saturday:** Pray for our partner and their leaders to know the best strategies and to recognize the hand of the Holy Spirit at work.

## Scripture Memory

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 9:31

## I Stand Amazed (How Marvelous)

Words by Charles H. Gabriel  
Arrangement by Chris Tomlin

I stand amazed in the presence  
Of Jesus the Nazarene  
And wonder how He could love me  
A sinner condemned unclean

How marvelous how wonderful  
And my song shall ever be  
How marvelous how wonderful  
Is my Savior's love for me

He took my sins and my sorrows  
He made them His very own  
He bore the burden to Calvary  
And suffered and died alone

When with the ransomed in glory  
His face I at last shall see  
'Twill be my joy through the ages  
To sing of His love for me

Copyright © 2006 worshiptogethersongs.com

*Due to copyright limitations, we are only allowed to print the lyrics to this song with no chords. We encourage you to download an mp3 of this song from iTunes.*

