

Supplies Needed: Journals; Handout; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); 30 to 40 foot rope; digital camera; one blindfold PER student

OPENING PRAYER

EXPLAIN Rope-Shape Activity

- Ok, I need everyone to stand in a circle.
- I'm now putting a 30 foot rope in the middle of the circle.
- You are not to touch this until I tell you to.
- What you're going to do is make a shape with the rope as a class.
- I will call out what the shape is to be.
- You must all go and pick up part of the rope and then y'all will make the shape.
- You will tell me when you're done.
- When you're done, I will take a picture with a digital camera of your shape.
- We'll do a 3 shapes.
- The first one is...a triangle.

DO Triangle; take picture

- Ok, everyone get back in a circle while I put the rope back in the middle of your circle.
- The next shape is...a square.

DO Square; take picture

- Ok, everyone get back in a circle while I put the rope back in the middle of your circle.
- At this point, I am now passing out blindfolds to you.
- Please take one and blindfold yourself.
- Now that you have done that, we will continue with our activity and make our third shape...which is a Triangle (again).

DO Triangle; take picture.

TELL

- How hard was it to make the first two shapes?
- Was it easier or harder to make the last shape?
- Did your decision-making process change when you were blindfolded? In what way?
- We're going to read a scripture story now where Saul starts to understand what he's doing vs what he's *supposed* to be doing because he gets blindfolded – in a way.

READ Acts 9:1-19

1 Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest in Jerusalem 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way of Jesus, men or women, he could arrest them and send them to Jerusalem to be put in jail.

3 Now as Saul was riding along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6 Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." 7 The men who were traveling with Saul stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." 11 The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." 13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your followers in Jerusalem; 14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest all who invoke your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel."

17 So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 And immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and then headed back to Jerusalem.

ASK

- At the beginning of the story, what is Paul wanting to do? (arrest those who follow the Way of Jesus)
- Does he succeed at his task? (No)
- Why? (Jesus interrupts; asks why are you persecuting me; Paul goes blind)

TELL/ASK

- Most of us know Saul as Paul. He shows up a lot in this book, the book of Acts, and he's credited with writing most of the letters in the New Testament: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, etc.
- His name in Hebrew is Saul. Translated into Greek, his name is Paul. This story of conversion for Saul is not marked by a name change. But because after this conversion, he's mostly traveling where people speak Greek, he's being called Paul, then, instead of Saul.
- We first met Saul a couple of weeks ago. He was in the stoning of Stephen story. If you look back at that story, can you find where he appears? (optional)
- Saul is a Pharisee who thinks he's doing good, doing God's work. He thinks he's protecting Israel from this "renegade" teaching of Jesus and his disciples.
- He's blinded though he doesn't really know it.

- As we see in the story, the scales don't fall off his eyes until after he's knocked on his butt and made to sit still for three days without seeing.
- After that happens, what does Saul do (verse 19)?

TELL

- So when we made shapes with the rope when blindfolded, how well did we do? (sometimes alright, but sometimes not)
- Compared to how we made the shapes when not blindfolded, how did we do? (not nearly as well)
- So we had to see what we were doing before we could see how badly we had done before, right?
- That's the same experience that Saul is having in this story.

NOTE: If you have less than 10 minutes in class left skip to the 2nd "TELL." Otherwise, keep going

- Let's watch a video clip that demonstrates what learning to see what our actions have done to others could look like:

WATCH movie clip

TELL

- We see how the man who is talking is in a wheelchair. His physical injury has helped him be able to see the wrong he's done. This is similar to what Saul experienced.
- And the man in the wheelchair is also going towards/making amends to at least one of the people he's wronged the most, just like we see Saul spend time with the disciples after he can see again.

TELL

- Last week we talked about how Moses was born.
- What did Pharaoh say was to happen to all the Israelite baby boys? (be killed/drowned)
- So Moses started out expendable/killable as a baby.
- But eventually Moses becomes, in some ways, a prince of his people (the Israelites) and leads them out of Egypt/oppression/infancy.
- Saul (as we learn from other stories in Acts) was a Roman citizen by birth. And since he was a Pharisee, we can infer that he had a pretty privileged up-bringing. That he came from a family of money and influence.
- And eventually, in some ways, Saul becomes a prince of the church and leads the church out of oppression/confusion/infancy.
- Here are two men with two very different upbringings, but because they pay attention to God, they live lives that have very similar patterns and end results: Patterns and end results that make paying attention to God easier for others.
- Our identity is often drawn from where we come from and who we come from. But the contrast of these two birth stories and the comparable life-arcs of Moses and Saul show us that paying attention to God trumps the story of where we come from.

CLOSING PRAYER