



OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: Acts 9:1-19

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

1 Meanwhile Paul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples were Jewish. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Pentecost came, and the Body of Christ/the Church was formed. The Church was formed within the Jewish community. This community was seen by the Pharisees as a threat. Paul was a Pharisee. And it was his job to pursue and prosecute Israelites that were participating in "The Way." Prosecution usually involved capital punishment. The phrase "breathing threats and murder" is a play on words to show that Paul was not breathing the Holy spirit (*ruach*), but an abomination. Paul was breathing the wrong air. Not the air of love, but the air of hatred. And it showed. The man was a beast. A force that, if left unchecked, would've seriously hampered, even destroyed, the newly-born Church.

8 Paul 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. This is a hitting-bottom moment for Paul. This powerful righteous man has been doing things that were eating at his heart. Paul wanted to do the right thing. And he saw the church, this uprising among his people as a threat. He was doing everything possible to stop it. But what he was doing in order to stop the Church went against the essence of who he was. And those actions eventually caught up to him, and in a rather dramatic way (as hitting bottom often is). Everything that Paul thought he knew was suddenly in question. His entire world had been turned upside down. And it left him unable to trust what he'd always known to be true. And thus, he must be led by the hand to finish his journey, unsure and unseeing.

[Ananias] 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 Paul's eyes, and his sight was restored. We are not made to be alone. We are not made to function as an island of self-containment. Paul is a brilliant and driven man. But he cannot get straightened out on his own. He hit bottom on his own. His own decisions got him there just fine. But he is not able to get off the bottom without the help of others. Ananias reaches out to help Paul, even though he doesn't want to help Paul. But because he does, then Paul is able to see again.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Persecution – when we feel challenged, when our way of life is threatened by another way of life, and we choose to fight instead of flee, then we end up persecuting those who we feel threatened by. Paul was an upstanding citizen. But because his way was being threatened, he threatened back.

Whenever we choose to hold our ground without inviting God into our planning, then we invariably arrive at a place of persecuting those whom we fear.

Insight – On our own, we can only see and understand so much. This is what happened for Paul. He was sure he was right. Until God showed him otherwise. If we're seeking God, and asking God to help us to understand what's going on for ourselves and for those around us, then, like Paul, we start to see and understand things we never saw/understood before. When we see things for the first time, it can be unsettling and can take us some time to get used to such a perspective (like Paul getting knocked off his horse). But we will adjust, just like we do when we get a new prescription for contacts or glasses. And once we do, then we can see and act more confidently.

Conversion – When we are threatened, but we invite God into our threatened feeling, then we will eventually experience a conversion. We will experience a breakthrough. It might be a minor breakthrough with our worldview shifting only slightly. But like in the case of Paul, our entire worldview might be turned upside down. And that takes some readjustment time. But once we're readjusted to our new understanding, then we can move with confidence in the right direction.

THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: cards with letters and numbers on them, tape, balloons, sharp pencils, yarn, and scissors.

Classroom Statement

This Movement & Games class consists of reading the Paul Conversion story from Acts 9 and then doing 3 games that help to illustrate the concepts of conversion and the confusion that often accompanies it.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

SHEPHERD ASKS "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY (Short and simple is perfect)

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- We're going to hear a story today about a man named Paul. Sometimes, he's also called Saul. Saul is how you say his name in Hebrew, Paul is how you say his name in Greek. In this story, we're just going to call him Paul to avoid any confusion.
- In the story you hear today about Paul, you'll hear about someone who thinks he is doing the right thing.
- The only problem is that he's doing the right thing for the Pharisees, but not the right thing for God.
- When he realizes (with the help of Jesus and God) that he's not doing the right thing, it takes him some time to change.
- Listen for how Paul changes.

READ Acts 9:1-19

1 Meanwhile Paul, 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 Paul 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, "Paul, Paul, 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 Paul stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8 Paul 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 Paul. 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 Paul and said, "Brother Paul, 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 Paul'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

- So Paul thinks he knows something (he's going to arrest Jews who are following the Way of Jesus)
- And, though its not in this story, Paul thinks he's doing God's work by doing this.
- Paul and other Pharisees think the Way of Jesus is a threat to the Jewish people.
- But then what Paul thinks he knows gets all scrambled up because God tells him to stop doing what he's been doing.

- When we think we know something and then we find out we were wrong, that can be upsetting.
- But, once we adjust to the new information, we can do more and better things!
- Paul becomes a better Follower of the Way of Jesus than he ever would've been as a Pharisee.

EXPLAIN activity (Feet Spell)

- We're going to do a game now where I need 6 feet (if you have 6 people or more, you can do two teams; if you have less, say five people, then one person gets to volunteer two feet and the rest volunteer one foot).
- Now I need you to stand in a line with your teammates, side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder.
- Now sit down on the ground.
- I'm going to come by your feet and tape these pieces of paper on to the bottom of your feet.
- [Tape the paper to their feet]
- Now if you lay down on your back and hold up your feet so that I can see them...
- Ah yes! The letters taped to your feet spell a word.
- Like Paul at the start of the story, this word is your starting point.
- This word is what you know and understand.
- Now, I'm going to tell you a different word for you to spell.
- Using the letters taped to your feet, you will move your legs so that the letters are in the right position to correctly spell the word. You may move, but you may not take a letter off your foot and switch it with someone else.
- (If there are two teams, then they will race to see who can spell the new word correctly and fastest; if there is only one team, time them – encourage them to figure it out in under 2 minutes)

WORD to start out with: Arrest 122345

WORDS to CALL out (they might ask "How do you spell that? Tell them to try and figure it out first. If they get stuck, help them either sound out the word, or give them the first couple of letters and let them figure it out from there):

Taser 51432

Tears 53124

Stare 45123

Rates 21534

Rarest 212345 (reason for the #s is on last page under "Suggestions for ages)

TELL

- So just like Paul, you started out knowing about arresting people.
- But you ended up being the rarest.
- It took some jostling and some moving around and maybe was a little unsettling, but it's much better to be the rarest than it is to arrest, don't you think?
- So it was with Paul. He was this guy who arrested people. But then, because he paid attention to God, he became a rare individual which is why we're still talking about him today, 2000 years later.

TRANSITION for next activity

- In the beginning of the story, it says that Paul was breathing threats and murder against those following the way of Jesus.

- That makes him sound like a mean person, right?
- So what is important to understand is that Paul thought he was doing the right thing.
- Paul thought of himself as a good person.
- He was an upstanding citizen.
- But he was being good on his own terms.
- He wasn't asking God "How should I be living."
- Instead, he was living like the people around him were living who also weren't asking God how to live. Instead, they kept referring to scripture and saying "This is how you live."
- When we think we know what's right and live it out without paying attention to God and asking God what's right, then our ways, even if we don't want them to be, will often times turn out to be destructive.
- Our next activity demonstrates how even if we think the way we do things is right, we could quite possibly be wrong.

EXPLAIN Balloon activity

- First, I'm going to split the class into two (or more) groups of 4 or 5 people.
- Second, I need one person from each group to volunteer to be the "inspector."
- Third, I need to talk to the inspectors outside of the room.
- So you stay put for just a moment (or else have the shepherd talk the class when you talk to the inspectors).

WHAT YOU'LL TELL to ONLY the INSPECTORS

- You may not talk to your team.
- Your team will be handing you balloons.
- For you to accept the balloons, the balloons must be:
 - Blown up and tied.
 - The next balloon must not be the same color as the last balloon that you accepted
 - The next balloon must not be handed to you by the same person who handed you the last balloon you accepted
 - FOR THE OLDEST KIDS: A bit of yarn must be attached to the balloon.
- If the balloon being handed to you does not fit the rules I just told you, then you pop the balloon with this sharpened pencil.
- Remember...you MAY NOT talk to or tell your team anything.

WHAT YOU'LL TELL TO THE WHOLE CLASS

- I am giving each team 30 balloons (if the oldest kids, also give 6 feet of yarn and a pair of scissors to each team)
- Your assignment is to hand the balloons your team has to your inspector in the correct manner.
- If the balloons are not handed to the inspector in the correct manner, then the inspector will pop the balloon.
- If the balloon is handed to the inspector in the correct manner, then the inspector will receive it and put it on the floor next to him/her.
- The team with the most accepted balloons wins.
- The inspectors are NOT ALLOWED TO TALK so DO NOT ask them questions.

DO the Balloon Activity

ASK

- So what was the correct way to give a balloon to the inspector?
- Did you think at certain times that you had the correct way figured out only to have your balloon be popped?
- Was that frustrating?

TELL

- Often times this is how we live life.
- We try to do our best without actually talking to God and then we keep popping balloons or getting our balloons popped.
- So in the activity, we COULDN'T talk to the inspector and so we didn't.
- But in life, we CAN talk to God and listen for a response.
- And when we do that, then we can keep checking in with God about what we're supposed to do next.

If there's time, EXPLAIN the last activity

- Paul went through a conversion.
- This means his thinking and his actions were changed.
- We're going to play a simple game called "Ultimate being" where we change our actions based on how well we play rock, paper, scissors.
- Make sure they know how to play rock, paper, scissors
- Then tell them that they all start out as a eggs. An egg waddles. It walks around with arms at its sides, saying "Waddle waddle waddle." An egg may only play rock paper scissors with other eggs.
- When you play a match as an egg and win, then you have a conversion experience and turn into a chicken. A chicken walks around flapping its wings saying "Bwaaaak! Bwaaak!" Chickens can only play other chickens.
- When you play a match as a chicken and lose, then you go back to being an egg and you have to start all over again.
- When you play a match as a chicken and win, then you have a conversion experience and turn into a ... monster. A monster walks around with its arms above it's head, saying "Rawr! I'm scary! Rawr!" Monsters may only play other monsters.
- When you play a match as a monster and lose, then you go back to being an egg and you have to start all over.
- When you play a match as a monster and win, then you have a conversion experience and turn into the "Ultimate Being." Ultimate beings have a great sense of irony and walk around making quotation marks with their fingers while saying, in a British accent, "I'm an Ultimate Being." Ultimate beings can only play other ultimate beings.
- When you lose, you go back to being an egg. If you win....you stay an ultimate being.

DO Ultimate Being Activity

CLEAN UP & DISMISS FOR SINGING

Suggested Variations for age groups

- The youngest students may not be able to spell.

- There will be numbers under the letters for the Feet Spell activity.
- If they are having trouble spelling, give them the number to “spell out” instead and then tell them what word they’ve spelled.