13. Paul Escapes (Acts 9:20-25)

"As for us, we can't stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:20)

PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
Community Safety
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

Asking for Help
Build a Basket Race
Loving God, Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Offering basket | Pencils | Marker | White paper | Art supplies of your choosing | Craft supplies of your choosing | Scissors

Gather: TV/DVD player | Church and community safety plans

Explore: TV/DVD player

Respond: Bowl | Several small baby dolls| Tablecloth | LED candle | Basket | Chair

Bless: Tablecloth | LED candle | Basket | TV/DVD player

Before You Teach

Our story for this week picks up right after last week's story. After Paul's heart was changed about the church, he went out and began to preach about Jesus in the synagogues, declaring Jesus the Son of God. People were baffled by this because Paul was so hard on Christians before God changed him. He had even taken them as prisoners. But Paul continued on. His ministry grew stronger and the Jewish people who lived in Damascus continued to be confused by him as he proved to them that Jesus was the Christ. After a while, the Jews made a plan to kill Paul, but Paul heard about it. Ironically, after Paul put so much effort into harassing followers of Christ, he became the one being harassed. He knew the Jews were watching the city gates, so he couldn't escape that way. So his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a basket through a hole in the city wall.

This story presents an opportunity to continue discussions about change. No one changed more than Paul who went from hating Christians to spreading Christianity. Though our Bible verse for this session comes from another lesson in the unit, in this story, Paul is a perfect example of living out this verse. He cannot stop speaking about what he has seen and heard as a result of being changed by Jesus, even when it endangers his life.

This story also presents opportunities to make life connections to friendship, safety, and asking for help. We'll discuss community safety, explore some help scenarios, and use our creativity to build a basket for Paul. You'll want your children to know that people in Christian community help one another and that it is OK to ask for help when needed. You'll also want them to understand that it is OK to change your mind like Paul did and to see change as a natural result of growth.

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GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display either attendance chart (Class Kit—pp. 16–17 or 15 & 18) at eye level.

- Play "Changed" (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have the children mark the "Attendance Chart" by signing their first names on week #13.

SAY: Today, we are learning a story about a time when the disciple Paul was in great danger.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 13 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of "Can You Imagine?" (Activity Sheets—p. 27). Let them complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the "Paul's Escape" activity (Activity Sheets—p. 28).

SAY: Paul's friends helped him escape a very bad situation.

OR

B—Community Safety (Discussion)

Before class: Spend some time getting to know the safety plans and equipment locations within your church. Learn about any safety plans for the larger community as well.

SAY: In our Bible story, Paul is in an unsafe situation. This story reminds us of how important it is to know what to do when you are in a dangerous situation.

ASK: Do you know how to be safe within our church or within the wider community?

- Allow the children to respond.
- Then discuss any (age appropriate) safety plans for your church.
- If there is time, take the children on a walk around your building and show them where the exits and your safety equipment is located. If an adult's assistance is needed for using the equipment, be sure to specify that.
- If there is time, have a discussion about safety plans within your wider community.

TIP: *Be sensitive to concerns or fears that talking about safety plans may bring up for the children.*

Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring a chair or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a helpful way for children to move easily from one activity to the next.*

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EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- When have you helped a friend, and when has a friend helped you?
- What are some things that you do to stay safe?

Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—Acts 9:20-25).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 13.

SAY: In our Bible story, Paul's friends help him stay safe.

ASK: Who helps you stay safe?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out "Paul Escapes" (Bible Story Sheets—Session 13).

Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the "Unit 3 Bible Verse" poster (Class Kit—pp. 10 & 23). Gather a marker and several sheets of white paper. Write each word of the Bible verse on a separate sheet of paper.

- Tell the children the Bible verse: "As for us, we can't stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).
- Invite the children to say the verse with you.

SAY: In our Bible story, Paul's friends help him escape by sneaking him out in a basket through an opening in the city wall. I would imagine that they had to stay pretty quiet to do this. Let's see how quietly we can put our Bible verse in order.

- Mix the pieces of paper you wrote on up, and hand them out to the children. Let the children work together to quietly arrange themselves in verse order.

Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

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RESPOND

Asking for Help (Activity)

Before class: Photocopy "Asking for Help" (Leader Guide—p. 84), and cut out the squares. Gather CEB Deep Blue Kids Bibles, paper, scissors, pencils, and a bowl.

- Have the children form teams. One child from one team will come forward to draw a card.
- Have the child read the card aloud, then let the child along with his or her team try to complete the task. If unsuccessful, allow another team a chance.
- Remind children that they can always ask for help!

OR

Build a Basket Race (Game/Collaborative Craft)

Before class: Gather a variety crafts supplies of your choosing, a chair, and enough small baby dolls for several teams in your class to have one.

SAY: Paul's friends helped him escape in a basket.

ASK: What if you had to build a basket out of just what is in front of you?

SAY: That's exactly what we're going to do! Your basket won't be big enough to fit a life-sized Paul, of course. For today, we're going to imagine that Paul is the size of one of these baby dolls.

- Divide the children into teams.
- Give each team a doll and allow them to construct a basket in any way they choose that can be used to lower Paul over a wall.
- After the teams are done building, let them do a show-and-tell style demonstration of what they have built. Use the back of a chair as a wall to lower "Paul" over.

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

Before class: Display the "Missions" poster (Class Kit—p. 2). Gather art supplies of your choosing.

- Review the poster with the children.

SAY: We'll be learning about and supporting the Wesley Centre over the next several weeks. Let's make cards for the center to show our support of the work they are doing.

- Let the children make cards using the art supplies.
- Information for sending the cards can be found at: https://advance.umcmission.org/p-428-john-wesley-community-center.aspx.

Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth, basket, and an LED candle.

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BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display "Unit 3 Bible Verse Signs" poster (Class Kit—p. 31) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Let's learn to sign our Bible verse.

- Gather the children around the Bible Verse Signs poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
- Teach the children to sign the verse.

SAY: Let's remember that Paul was helped by his friends as we sign the verse to a friend.

- Have the children practice signing the verse to another child.

Praising

Before class: Gather a TV/DVD player and the Adventure DVD.

SAY: Let's learn a song about being changed by God's love.

- Play "Changed" on the Adventure DVD.
- Let the children sing along if they would like.

Blessing

SAY: In our Bible story, Paul's friends help him escape. One of the ways that we can help our friends is by praying for them. Let's take a moment to help our friends by praying for them.

- Gather around the worship center, and light the LED candle.
- Have the children form pairs.
- Let the children each take turns praying for one another. Tell them that they may pray aloud for their partner or they may pray silently. Both partners in the pair do not have to choose the same method.
- Come together and say the following prayer for the group.

PRAY: Dear God, we thank you for the example of friendship that Paul's friends provided. We pray that you'll be with each of our friends here today and keep them safe. Amen.

At Home with God

SAY: What was one thing that you learned today about Paul's escape? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets—Session 13, and the Unit 3 Song Sheet home with each child.

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Asking for Help

You can't walk, but you must get from one side of the room to the other. What are you going to do? Be creative!	You can't talk, but you need to share the important message, "Jesus loves you!" How can you share your message?
Your hands are not working, but you need to draw a picture of your church. How will you get your picture drawn?	You are very cold, but you do not have a blanket or coat. How might you get warm?
Your arm is broken, but you need to pick up a big pile of Bibles. How will you lift such a heavy load?	You can't see, but you need to read today's Bible verse. How will you learn the verse?
No one in the room can talk except for you. You need to find out what three people ate for breakfast. How will you find out what people ate? Be creative!	Your hands are dirty, but you don't know how to wash your hands. How will you get your hands clean?

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