

Saul's

Bad Day

The Point: God can use us all.

Scripture Connect: Acts 9:1–8, 19b–22

Supplies for all Session 12 activities options: pencils, prepared poster, paper, Bible, tape, newspaper, thick black markers

The Basics for Leaders

Saul is heading to town to track down and arrest people who believe in Jesus. He's got his posse, his orders from the high priest, his firm belief he's doing the right thing. After all, Christians are claiming that the Messiah has already come, and Saul just doesn't buy it.

Until that Messiah shows up—in a light so bright it knocks Saul to the ground.

Saul hears Jesus's voice, and in one heart-wrenching moment his life is changed. Not only has he been wrong about the Messiah, he's been wrong about hunting Christians. The thing he thought was right was totally wrong.

Plus, dusting himself off, Saul realizes he's blind.

Tough day, but one that set the stage for a wonderful day later in the week. That's when Jesus sent a believer to visit Saul, to help Saul see again and so Saul could be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Saul became a Christ follower, a missionary, a maverick who pushed to carry the message of Jesus to non-Jews. The man who once was an enemy of Jesus became a passionate, focused follower—and a great example of the truth you'll explore today: God can use us all!

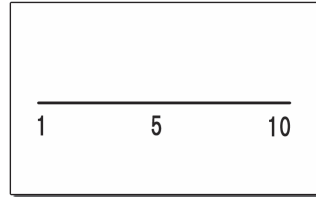
OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

HOWZITGOIN’

Time: about 5 minutes, depending on attendance

Supplies: pencils, prepared poster

Before kids arrive, draw a line on a poster. Write a 1 on the left end of the line, a 10 on the right, and a 5 in the middle. As kids arrive, ask them to pencil in their initials on the line.



Say: If this past week was so awful you wish you’d slept through it, place your initials by the 1. If it was a great week you wish you could repeat, put your initials by the 10. Place your initials anywhere on the line that shows how you feel about this past week—except exactly on the 5. Because there’s no such thing as a week that’s exactly half good and half bad!

After kids have signed in, give them 30 seconds each to explain why they placed their initials where they did. Be sure to include your own initials and explain your placement on the line. Kids will begin to express themselves more over time, and hearing their stories will help you adapt this lesson to make it relevant to your kids’ lives.

OPENING ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

ONE OF A KIND

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: 1 sheet of paper and 1 pencil per 2 children

Ask children to form pairs. (If you have young children, consider pairing them with older kids for this activity.) Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each pair.

Explain: I’ll give you a category, and I want you to think of five things that fit in it. Write down or draw your answers. If you have something on your list no other pair has, you get a point for that answer. If any other pair has that item on its list, you don’t get a point. Your goal: be creative and score some points!

If you have just a few children, ask for only three items per category, and let each child work on his or her own. It's important you have at least three teams for scoring purposes. Jump in as a team, if necessary.

Here are categories to get you started—feel free to add your own!

- Favorite fast food
- Vegetables
- Pets at the pet store
- Ways to save money
- Brands of soda pop
- Makes of cars
- Sports in the Olympics
- Ways to encourage others
- Holidays
- Zoo animals

Total up the points and then declare everyone a winner. Say: **None of us came up with exactly the same list for each category. We're all different, but we all came up with good answers that helped our teams. That's how it is in life: we're different, but God uses all of us!**

Bad Days Game

SNACK INVASION

Time: 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Before this activity, it may be a good idea to ask permission or clue in the adult group before having kids go on their snack invasion. Tell adults not to act as if they had prior warning of this unusual—and fun—invasion!

Gather kids and remind them that somewhere in the building are a bunch of adults meeting and where there are adults sitting around, there are ... snacks! Together you're going to find out what those snacks are, where they are, and retrieve a sample.

For this mission you'll need volunteers to fill the following roles and make your snack invasion successful. If you have a lot of children, assign more than

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have mostly **older children** (4th, 5th, and 6th graders), modify the lesson in this way: don't let the adults know you're invading—go for broke!

one child to each role. If you have very few children, assign one child per role and take one yourself, if necessary.

- **Advance Scout:** who will crawl across the floor to avoid being seen and will retrieve a snack *sample* (not all of them, just a sample).
- **Distracter:** who will provide a distraction if the Advance Scout is spotted. This person will walk up to the adult group and draw attention away from the Scout by saying, “I think my belly button is broken.”
- **Cover Crew:** who will stay just out of sight, saying things like, “My favorite Bible verse is ...” and “Let’s look that verse up.” This crew makes the adults think your session is still under way.

Say: **To pull this off and get a snack sample, we’ve got to work together. Everyone has a part to play. Ready?**

Do a bit of quick planning and launch your snack invasion. (If you want to ensure success, tip off the adult small-group leader you’ll be coming.)

When children have their samples and are all back in their designated area, discuss:

- **Why was it important we all did our part?**
- **What’s another place in life where it’s important that we all cooperate and work together?**
- **God can use all of us, but do you think he does? Are there people he can’t use? Why?**

Say: **Today we’ll explore the story of how God used someone who you’d never thought could be used by God, someone who was actually an enemy of Jesus and the church!**

Bad Days Bible Story

SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE A SIGN

Time: about 15 minutes

Supplies: Bible, 1 sheet of paper per child, 1 pencil per child, tape

Before kids arrive, write the words *fair* and *unfair* on two sheets of paper, one word per paper. Tape the papers to opposite sides of the room.

Gather kids in the center of the room and point out the signs. Then say: **Think about the meanest kid you know in school—someone who's a bully.**

This kid is mean to other kids, says hurtful things, maybe even cheats at games or tells lies about others.

Now imagine that the principal gives the bully the very best job in school!

By the way: what is the best job in the school? Raising the flag? Cleaning the restrooms? What do you think?

Allow children to respond and then say: **Yeah, that's it! That's the job! Does it seem fair that a bully gets that great job? Pick one of the signs as your answer and hop over there.**

After kids hop to their choice of signs, encourage them to share their thoughts and explain their reasons for answering as they did.

Then say: **It seems wrong for a bully to have the chance to be the biggest help, doesn't it?**

Today we'll meet a guy who lived in Jesus's time who was meaner than the meanest bully! This guy hated God's people and spent his time chasing, hurting, arresting, and even killing those who loved and followed Jesus! And yet God chose to use him in an amazing way!

Let's read what the Bible says about this guy and how he met Jesus one day. As we read, you'll have more chances to make choices, so hop back to the center of the room.

Read aloud Acts 9:1–2. Briefly discuss what Saul was doing to be mean and hateful to God's people. Then ask: **Was Saul treating God's people fairly or unfairly? You choose. Hop to the sign that shows your answer!**

Ask kids to briefly explain their answers. Then say: **Seems to me that Saul treated Jesus's followers and God's people with unfair hatred. Everyone back to the center of the room.**

AGE-ALERT TIPS

If you have **younger children** who may not be able to read well, point out the signs you've taped to the wall and be sure to read them aloud often so everyone knows which choice they will be hopping to throughout this activity.

Now listen to what happened next—and be ready to make another choice!

Read aloud Acts 9:3–8.

Then say: **Do you think it was fair or unfair of Saul to treat Jesus so badly? You choose. Hop to the sign that shows your answer.**

When kids have chosen, ask children to briefly explain their decision and then to return to the center of the room.

Say: **Saul treated Jesus and his followers in unfair, wicked ways—and yet Jesus came to Saul and spoke to him.**

Read aloud Acts 9:19b–22 and then say: **God told Saul to change his heart and life, and Saul began to serve and obey God. Do you think it was fair or unfair for God to give Saul a second chance and give Saul an important job to do? You choose and hop to the sign that shows your answer.**

Ask children to briefly explain their answers again. Then say: **Saul was a mean, hateful guy—a bully—until Jesus appeared to him and God chose Saul to serve him. Fair or unfair, God used Saul in amazing ways. And if God can use a bully like Saul in great ways, just think how God can use you!**

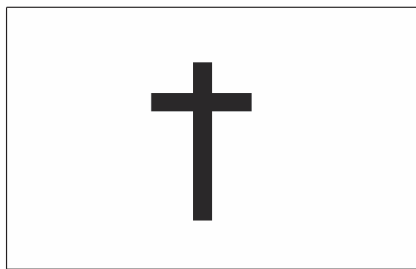
CLOSING PRAYER

CROSS-EYED PRAYER

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: 2 sheets of paper and a section of newspaper for each child, thick black markers

Before kids arrive, draw a cross on a sheet of paper. (Be sure you use very thick black markers for this activity!) Make the cross about four inches high and three inches across. You'll use this sample to show kids during the activity so they know approximately how large to draw their own crosses.



Give each child two sheets of paper and a section of newspaper. The newspaper is to place on the floor as a work surface—you don't want a marker to stain the floor!

Ask children to place one sheet of paper on the newspaper and place the extra sheet of paper on their laps. Then have kids use markers to each draw a cross on the sheet of paper sitting on the newspaper. Encourage children to make the vertical and horizontal lines of the cross thick and solid.

Say: In a few moments I'll ask you to hold your cross picture about a foot in front of your face and stare at it. Then, as quickly as you can, you'll switch that sheet of paper with the blank one on your lap. You'll hold the blank sheet of paper the same distance from your nose. Let's practice once.

Once children have practiced, say: **Now hold your cross about a foot in front of your face and stare at it for 30 seconds. I'll tell you when to switch papers.**

When 30 seconds have passed, tell children to quickly make the switch with their clean sheets of paper and stare at them instead. They should continue to see the cross as an afterimage. Ask children what they see.

Have children put down their papers. Say: **Keeping our eyes on the cross—on Jesus—is what Saul did. He met Jesus in a life-changing encounter, and from that day forward he never took his eyes off Jesus, never forgot what happened on the cross.**

Let's ask God to keep us mindful of what he's done for us, and ask him to use us in any way he wants. Ask your children to join you in prayer.

Pray: God, help us keep our focus on Jesus and to always remember that he can use each of us. We want to be used by you, Jesus. Show us how. Amen.

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 1

INSTANT TALENT SHOW

Time: about 10 minutes

Supplies: none

Yep, God can use us all ... starting now.

Encourage children to give God their talents by holding an impromptu talent show where children can juggle, dance, sing, tell jokes, impersonate people (maybe you?), or whatever else they enjoy doing.

Encourage, but don't force, everyone to participate. Then discuss:

- How might God use your talent—or another one—in the next week?
- Why is letting God use your abilities a good idea?

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 2

NEWSPAPER HUDDLE

Time: about 5 minutes

Supplies: 1 sheet of newspaper

Place a sheet of newspaper on the floor.

Say: **Who can God use? All of us! Let's celebrate how we all fit in God's plans, by all standing on this sheet of paper. How can we stand so we all fit?**

After kids sort out a way to fit, fold the sheet in half and invite them to do the same thing again. (Hint: one easy way to put lots of people on a sheet is for them to stand on one foot, lean back, and balance one another by holding on.)

After you've gotten the paper as small as possible and still fit, ask children to sit. Say: **We're all different and so are our feet! Yet there was a place for all of us on the paper.** Ask:

- How is that like fitting into our church and church family?
- Where do you fit in serving Jesus?

EXTRA-TIME ACTIVITY—OPTION 3

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

Time: 5 minutes

Supplies: none

Gather kids in a circle. Ask: **If you could pick how God would use you, what would you ask him to help you do and help you become?**