

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message*  
Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

Make two copies of the Bible passage to be read at the beginning of the Gathering Time. A "clean" copy is found on the last page of this session.

### **Bible Study Leader:**

Bring a 3"x 5" blank card for each of the teens (and a wide point marker). They are to write the letters WGPL on the cards for an activity. Let them write the letters.

### **Worship Time Leader:**

Choose a current and evangelistic missionary need somewhere in the world from one of your favourite mission information websites. Read the “Mission Moment” section to see how you will use it.

### **Music Sources:**

“Send Me, O Lord, Send Me”, CCLI #246942

“Amazing Grace”, CCLI #22025, Public Domain

“Great is the Lord”, CCLI #1149

“Softly and Tenderly”, CCLI #28380, Public Domain

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message*****Focal Text**

Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

**Background Text**

Acts 9:1-31

**Main Idea**

In Paul's transforming experience of conversion, God made Paul his chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

**Question to Explore**

What has God chosen you to do through *your* conversion?

**Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to testify of what they believe God has chosen them to do through their conversion.

**Gathering Together:**

Choose two good readers to read the following passage:

**Reader 1:** "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Reader 2:** And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

**Reader 1:** On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

**Reader 2:** But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house he dragged off men and women and put them in prison" (Acts 7:59-8:3).

## First Thoughts:

During the building of a beautiful new church building in southwest Calgary, Alberta, Canada, several incidents happened that discouraged the people of the church. Vandals started a fire in some papers in one of the downstairs classrooms. Fortunately, the fire burned itself out before too much damage was done.

On another occasion, other vandals brought in a box of overripe mandarin oranges and threw them all around the kitchen that was being built and nearing completion. The next day, the volunteer working on the cabinets spent the entire day scrubbing off the oranges that had stuck to everything in the kitchen. The sugar in the oranges served as a glue to keep the orange pulp adhering tightly to the cabinets and floor.

Since church people were doing much of the building of the church, these foolish acts of destruction were particularly disturbing.

But the building continued without further incident. How different the reality of that church was to the reality of the first church in Jerusalem. The persecution of that first church was more than an annoyance; it resulted in the death of Stephen—a man “full of God’s grace and power” (Acts 6:7). Stephen had been brought before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish legal council) and was accused of blasphemy. Acts 15 tells us “All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”

After Stephen was stoned to death, the whole church began to be persecuted. And in the forefront of the persecution against the church was Saul, the hero of today’s Bible study. What could have happened to so dramatically change Saul? It must have been something amazing!

## Closing the Gathering Time:

Sing “Amazing Grace.”

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won’t need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *Chosen to Carry the Lord’s Message*

#### **Focal Text**

Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

#### **Background Text**

Acts 9:1-31

#### **Main Idea**

In Paul’s transforming experience of conversion, God made Paul his chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

#### **Question to Explore**

What has God chosen you to do through *your* conversion?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to testify of what they believe God has chosen them to do through their conversion.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

An adult remembers an incident that happened when, as a child, he was a Boy Scout. He had a strong sense of “right and wrong.” He was large for his age and was prepared to enforce the “correct” standard on individuals who deviated from his standard. One evening during a week-long outing, a fellow scout was asked to get some water by the patrol leader. The student complained about doing it. This had not been the first time that his behaviour had been less than acceptable—at least according to the Scout with the high standards. One July evening, he felt it was his responsibility to do something about the other Scout’s attitude. The events that followed were like a vicious wind that blew through the camp. The imposed standards, along with the Scout’s six-foot stature, did not leave any opportunity for the other individual to dispute the authority over him. Fortunately, for the larger boy, the standards he was enforcing on his fellow Scout also

forced him to obey the orders. The evening ended with tension, but all were safe. The Scout learned a “life-changing” lesson that evening: he learned that his beliefs and standards weren’t one hundred per cent correct and he did not have the right to impose them on some one else. He had an experience that altered the course of events in his life.

## **Background:**

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

This story is not unlike Saul in our Bible passage. Saul was imposing his religious standard on others. Saul was enforcing his standard by helping to stone Stephen and hunting down followers of Jesus. But Saul, like the Scout, responded to a higher authority and had a life-changing experience. Saul turns from being the hunter of believers to being a spokesman for Jesus.

As we read through Acts, we visit the two major spokesmen of the New Testament. Acts speaks briefly about Peter, but dwells on Saul. Saul of Tarsus was the fiercest enemy of the church. This one who arrested believers is transformed and becomes a great spokesman and theologian. Saul’s Christian witness, his lifestyle, and his writings are the glue that cements our Christian heritage together.

## **Focusing on the Meaning:**

### **The Bounty Hunter (Acts 9:1-2)**

9:1-2. Saul was “a vicious storm,” that swept believers up. After devastating the believers in Judea, Saul obtained permission from the religious leaders to hunt and persecute believers who had evidently sought refuge in Damascus after being driven out of Jerusalem. Saul was determined to extradite these believers as prisoners for “suitable” punishment. Even in the face of persecution, these believers continued to be a faithful witness to the gospel.

### **The Awakening (Acts 9:3-9)**

9:3. Damascus is northeast of Jerusalem. Saul drove his party to reach their destination before word of his mission could warn the believers whom he planned to ferret out. As he approached this objective, Jesus intervened.

9:4-7. Some have explained this event by inferring that Saul suffered from heat stroke, but the voice that was audible to Saul spoke in Aramaic. His men heard only a noise. Saul’s Damascus encounter forced him to face some issues:

1. Jesus of Nazareth was actually alive.

2. He had to repent; this is difficult for a self-righteous person to do.
3. He had to understand that while he thought he was serving God that in fact he was working against God and persecuting the Messiah.
4. He had to be prepared to change, and he was.

9:8. Blindness! This once proud Pharisee was blinded and led around like a small child. Saul was humbled. Jesus had gained Saul's attention.

9:9. Saul now had to sit and contemplate who this Jesus was. It is interesting how you and I can be so sure of life's direction—until our health is affected.

### **The Obedient (Acts 9:10-17)**

9:10. Obedience is shown in many different ways. Ananias was a dedicated follower of Jesus and his obedience had been proven; therefore, he was called to be a part of redirecting Saul.

9:11. Saul had encountered Jesus and now he spent time praying. Saul's birthplace is mentioned; Tarsus is northeast of Cyprus, on the Mediterranean coast.

9:12. Jesus planned for Saul to regain his sight, even before Ananias was informed of his part.

9:13-14. Believers are first called "saints" (set-apart ones) in Acts. Ananias knew about Saul and his mission to Damascus. He was not comfortable about going to see or help this persecutor of people of the Way.

9:15-16. Jesus directs Ananias to "Go!," but he also supplies a glimpse of Saul's calling: He will go to the Gentiles and their kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And Saul will suffer for Christ's name. Saul was the instrument who God used to bring love to the Gentiles as well to the people of Israel. Paul was trained as a Pharisee; hence he had the background needed to discuss or even debate the scripture with the religious leaders. As humans, we are like jars of clay—fragile; therefore, if we do any good it is due to the surpassing power of God. Saul was a vessel destined to do great things for the kingdom of God, but it was due to his preparedness, his willingness, and God's strength and power.

9:17. Ananias was a sensitive, obedient, courageous follower. His Lord said, "Go!" and he went. Who might we encounter in our daily walk that we could help, as Ananias helped Saul? Who might we unleash for Jesus, if we are obedient?

### **The Witness (Acts 9:18-22)**

9:18-19. Saul gains his sight in two ways. He has physical healing, with scales falling from his eyes, and secondly he sees Jesus as Lord and Master, where in the past



Jesus was the One whom he persecuted by persecuting believers. Saul regained his physical strength and was ready to tell the world his personal testimony. It is important to notice that Saul was part of the widening context of the Christian church. Gentiles were being reached (Acts 8, 10, 11).

9:20-22. Saul was physically well, spiritually enlightened, and trained in the Jewish faith. He did not waste time. He immediately started sharing his new-found faith in Jesus.

### **Proof of a Changed Life (Acts 9:26-29)**

9:26-29. A few writers believe that three years may have passed between verse 25 and 26. When Saul joined the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, his reputation hindered his fellowship. As Saul tried to fellowship, he may have been working with people who had friends, relatives, or even loved ones who had previously been persecuted by him or by those under his leadership. The questions arose about Saul, but Barnabas, who had given so much to the fellowship, stepped forward and spoke on Saul's behalf, telling of his action in Damascus.

The word *apostle* most likely refers to church leaders in general, rather than to individuals; therefore, there is no contradiction with other scriptures (Galatians 1:18-19). Paul is an example for all of us. He went to the people who needed to know about Jesus. Saul went to the Hellenistic Jews (Greek Jews), but they were outraged with this witness and they were determined to stop Saul.

### **Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

Saul's encounter was real and unconventional. Jesus approaches each new believer in a way that will catch that person's attention. Jesus demands of each believer the same things:

1. Be ready to share what you know with others (Ananias v.17, Saul v.20-22).
2. Believe in the Lordship of Jesus (Ananias v.17, Saul v.20).
3. Share with those who need to know (Saul v.22, 29).

Each Christian has the opportunity to serve but some are more usable because they seek opportunities to train for service and are willing to serve in whatever situation God chooses to place them. I once heard a friend say that the reason she has had some remarkable and exciting opportunities was that she had learned to say, "Yes, I will serve," when more ordinary opportunities arose. Paul was usable because he had studied, because he said, "Yes," and because he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. The place of service is not always friendly, but the power of Jesus Christ is always with those who are willing to follow God's leading.

Barnabas is an example for us to follow. We must not judge an individual from what we see; we cannot let our prejudices influence us.

### **For Personal Reflection:**

1. **What have I learned from this study?**
  
2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**
  
3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

**Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.**

#### **Focal Text**

Acts 9:1-22, 26-29

#### **Background Text**

Acts 9:1-31

#### **Main Idea**

In Paul's transforming experience of conversion, God made Paul his chosen instrument to carry the gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

#### **Question to Explore**

What has God chosen to do through *your* conversion?

#### **Teaching Aim**

To lead participants to testify of what they believe God has chosen them to do through their conversion.

#### **Connect with Life:**

Have participants share a personal experience of a life-changing event—events such as a wedding, or a new job.

Say: "When you are sharing, tell us how you felt—in the beginning as well as during the event, and after the event was over."

## Guide the Study:

Ask: What does a team do to get ready for the game? Take all the answers, but stop at "Scout" (watch to determine the methods, strengths, weaknesses, etc.) the other team.

Say: Let's scout out Saul by brainstorming about what we know of him.

Have members look up where Jerusalem and Damascus are by using maps in their Bibles or on a large map, if available.

Encourage a member to explain this: When Saul met Jesus, what happened?

Call for a list of the decisions Saul made, recorded in verses 4 to 7.

Ask: How do you think Jesus gets our attention away from things, and gets us focused on him?"

Pose this question: Why do you think Ananias would not want to help Saul?

Urge the group to honestly answer this: Does Jesus ask us to do things we don't like? Explore examples and allow several to be given.

Ask: What are some things we do not want to do?

Say: Jesus allows each of us different opportunities to be molded. If we are willing, we will be used in ways we never imagined. Ananias was ready to be used. Let's make a list of things that might prevent someone from being used.

Ask a group member to share a personal testimony of when Jesus became Lord of their life.

Ask the group to think seriously about this: What changes needed to take place in your life?

## Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the Youth!!! Take Ten page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Pass out self-sticking papers and have members list people groups that they could share Jesus with. Stick the papers on the wall and brainstorm for ways we could touch these lives in a meaningful way.

Ask: "What do you feel Jesus is calling you to do because you are one of His followers?"

Pray: Ask God to make clear what He has chosen you to do, and ask for the courage and will to do whatever He has asked.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

*You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.*

### **Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message** **Acts 9:1-22, 26-29**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

## **WGPL**

**Discuss with one another some of the major decisions you may be making in the near future.** These would include:

Q: What courses to take in order to graduate and be ready for university.

Q: Whether or not to go to university, and where to go.

Q: What job to take in order to have spending money.

Q: What friends to hang out with.

Q: Who to date.

Q: When to marry (for some).

Huge, life-defining decisions make up the reality of teens. Related to and determining the answer to most of these decisions is the larger one:

### **What does God have Planned for my Life?**

**Homework!!!** Do you have a mirror, in a rather private place, in your room? or maybe a computer that only you use? or just someplace that you look at every day?

If so, write the above question on a card and stick it somewhere in that place; then ask yourself, at least once a day: “How can I discover the answer to this question?”

**Suggestion:** You may want to keep your quest more private by writing only the key first letters **WGPL**, and/or you might want to use the WGPL as wallpaper on your computer for a while. Creative? Use a bold, special font, add a background meaningful to you, or, even simply colour the letters. Easy!

**Worship Time** (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message***  
***Acts 9:1-22, 26-29*****Beginning the Service:**

Have your preschoolers share the envelopes (with each participant), which you prepared beforehand, containing the "Roman Road," and addressed:

**To Whom It May Concern:  
The Lord's Message**

Ask the congregation to leave the envelopes unopened until they get home. Explain that these envelopes should stay in the Bible they carry with them to church and other places—for at least a month; then they may want to tape the item—the one they'll find inside the envelope—to the inside cover of their Bible.

Sing together: "Great Is the Lord," remembering to start out in a fairly low key (This hymn really goes high!). Or, choose another song that praises and glorifies the Lord.

**Offering:**

Remind the congregation of how your church receives tithes and offerings. Encourage them gently in returning to God a portion of that with which He has blessed them.

**Praying for the World:**

Choose a current and evangelistic missionary need somewhere in the world from one of your favourite mission information websites. Briefly share it and ask the congregation to talk silently with God for a few moments about what He wants each of you individually and as a church to do about it.

**Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to**



**give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

### **Three Servant Leaders—In God's Will**

Pat was a competent employee of a major oil company, who was transferred to Calgary, Alberta. Eventually he became vice-president of the company and was put in charge of environmental issues—a major responsibility in a country where oil production must live in harmony with beautiful mountains, rivers, and a fragile ecosystem. Pat had an important job.

But the oil company was not the only important job he had. Shortly after moving, he discovered a new church with a beautiful building, a huge debt, and a small membership. From the first, Pat and his wife, Gail, knew that their real reason for being in Calgary was their ministry in this church. Both are Sunday School teachers and have served as deacons; Gail served as a women's ministry leader, and Pat, as a member of the church council and most recently as Discipleship Team leader—a task that essentially involves overseeing the education ministries of the church.

The passion that Pat and Gail have experienced is like the concept of vocation that sees our lives as a partnership with God, in His work, in the world. Three people in today's Bible study speak to us about finding a purpose for being in the world—one that is related to the purpose of God:

#### **Person # 1: Stephen**

Stephen was chosen by the twelve disciples to care for some of the mundane tasks of the church (making sure that the widows were cared for in an equitable way [Acts 6:1]). Stephen was a man who was full of faith and must have already been busy in ministry. As he conducted his tasks, as one of the first deacons of the church, Stephen was also busy doing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people (Acts 6:8). He became such a threat to religious leaders that he was taken to the Sanhedrin and, after preaching a sermon that included the whole sweep of Israelite history, from Abraham to Jesus, Stephen was stoned to death.

Stephen was called to a specific task—that of caring for the needs of people in the early church so that the apostles could be about the task of prayer and the ministry of the word. Stephen so faithfully did his task that he was given a larger task of preaching the word and then of dying for the word. Before his stoning, he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55).

#### **Person # 2: Saul**

Running parallel to Stephen's story is Saul's story. Saul was part of the group who was trying to stamp out the fledgling group who was following the Christ. An ardent Jew,

Saul was convinced that these people were in error. He was a willing watcher of Stephen's stoning; those who participated in the stoning laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (Acts 7:58).

Saul's heart was so turned against the new believers, and his intellect so sure that he was right, that a miraculous happening needed to occur in order for Saul to believe. He may have been at the Sanhedrin when Stephen preached; he certainly was at the stoning of Stephen and heard him say, "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." Only an earth-shaking event would change Saul's mind.

Saul was on the way to the city of Damascus, with the purpose of finding Christians who had left Jerusalem because of the persecution, and intent upon bringing them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

As he neared Damascus, a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard the voice of Jesus asking, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts. 9:4)

The conversation that Jesus had with Saul was very brief. He answered Saul's question, "Who are you, Lord?" by saying, "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what to do" (Acts 9:5).

As Saul got up from the ground, he discovered his blindness and was led by the hand into Damascus.

His life's mission had changed. His vocation would, from this point on, be in accord with the purposes of God.

### **Person # 3: Ananias**

The third man who found his vocation, or calling, in these events was Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision and told him where to find Saul and how to participate in the restoration of Saul's sight. Ananias was appropriately reluctant to have an encounter with this man Saul who had done so much harm in Jerusalem, and who had come to Damascus with authority, from the chief priests, to arrest believers.

Ananias obeyed the command and found that his life's vocation had allowed him to be part of the conversion experience of Saul, and involved in the beginning of Saul's ministry.

### **Call to Commitment:**

Listen to this testimony: "An old song that was new when this writer was affirming and clarifying my call to ministry was "Send me, O Lord, send me." As a ten-year-old I answered what I knew of that call, by promising to be a summer missionary as a

university student. As a high school graduate, I walked the long aisle at a conference centre, where I knew only the kind woman who had invited me to spend a week with her, and I confirmed a call to full-time Christian ministry. As a university student I thrilled to the many opportunities for service and ministry that were modeled for me and in which I had a part. As a young wife I responded to a missionary's call to join the mission enterprise. God's special gift to me on that day was to find my husband at the altar, responding to that same call. Then later, in mid-life, I felt the touch of God and heard him say, "Go!" when it was time to leave one mission field for another."

Our study of Saul's calling, "Chosen to Carry the Lord's Message," is best understood in the context of Stephen's commitment and Ananias' obedience. And it is best understood as the way in which God is asking us today to respond to his calling in our own lives. What special act of faithfulness will be yours this week? What simple act of obedience to God's call could change your life today?

### **Concluding the Service:**

Sing together, "*Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling*" or any song that calls for obedience and commitment.

Gathering Time Leader: Make a copy, cut in half, and share with the two readers.

### **Scripture Reading for the Gathering Together Moment:**

Choose two good readers to read the following passage:

**Reader 1:** "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' The he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep.

**Reader 2:** And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

**Reader 1:** On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

**Reader 2:** But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison" (Acts 7:59-8:3).

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