

WEEK #4 (7- 18-21) Justifying Grace (*Justifying grace is the gift that sets us right with God. Because his son, Jesus, died on the cross, when we accept Jesus as our savior, our sins are set aside. By going through the door of accepting Jesus, it is “just as if I’d never sinned” That’s justification.*)

KEY WORDS: CHANGE/TRANSFORMATION

MEMORY VERSE

“If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify (cleanse) us from all unrighteousness (wickedness). 1 John 1:9

Backstory for today’s Scripture: Read Acts 9:1-9

When first we meet him, Saul is quite wicked. In the first days of the church, the Jews did not like these disciples of Jesus, called the Way, and tried to hurt them. Saul was one of those Jews, and he was in charge of arresting and even killing Christian people.

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. –Acts 9:1-2

But on his way to attack and harm Christians, something remarkable happens. Jesus comes in and takes over the show...

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. “He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him,

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. “Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. “For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. –Acts 9:3-9

TODAY’S SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:10-19 NIV

*10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”
“Yes, Lord,” he answered.*

11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! **This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.** 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

APPLICATION/MESSAGE

Transformation...It's a fascinating thing, whether we are watching tadpoles and caterpillars or seeds and plants. What an amazing miracle that God can do such wonderful things...and that He can transform our lives, as well! In this lesson, we will take a look at one character in the Bible whose life was radically changed. Through **Saul** (His name was changed to Paul after his transformation from being an enemy of Jesus and Jesus's followers, to a mighty leader for Jesus.) and Paul's conversion and work, we see that **anyone can be changed and used to serve God.**

Poor Ananias. He had heard that one of the most feared enemies of the followers of Jesus was coming to arrest and punish them. Then God told him he needed to go to Judas' house to lay hands on this man, **Saul**, to heal him. Scary! Ananias even argues with God because he didn't want to go for fear of how he would be treated. In "restoring" Saul's sight, God knew Saul could now look at others as God does.

In our last lesson we learned about a kind of GRACE (prevenient) where God shows us His love before we even know it and helps us to realize our sin and our need for Jesus. Today we are learning about "Justifying" GRACE: what God **DOES FOR US** through His son, Jesus. **Jesus takes on our SIN and we take on his "right standing" with God.** When God sees us, he sees us "sinless." (*because Jesus took our place*) You can remember what "justify" means by remembering this: It makes it "Just as if I" never sinned.

God tells Ananias that **Saul** is his "chosen instrument" to share God with others (*just like us*). Even though **Saul** had harmed and even had Christians arrested, he has had a dramatic encounter with God that has left him transformed! He has said YES to God.

Saul's name would be changed to **Paul**. After all, **Paul** was a totally new person after he accepted Jesus into his life. The old, wicked **Saul** was gone! **That's what can happen in each of our lives when we ask Jesus into our hearts and into our daily lives, and when we surrender control of who God wants us to be to Jesus.**

ALPHABET PRAYERS: Using the letters of the alphabet, pray for people or things that each letter brings to mind. (*An example might be **A = America**. Pray for God to watch over America and to give our leaders Godly wisdom over man's wisdom. Or it could be **a friend whose name begins with the letter A**.*)

SONG "One Way, Jesus" @ <https://youtu.be/G689PIEXiXk>

Prayer Song: "Into my heart" @ <https://youtu.be/Ouxtq-7PNMQ>

CHILDREN AND/OR GROUP HANDS- ON ACTIVITY:

- **Blind transformation**...play a little game with the group to test senses and observations. Have one person at a time be blindfolded (or close eyes/leave room) and have the rest of the people sit in a circle or line. There are a couple of variations here, but something will change about the circle, and the blindfolded "it" needs to guess what happened. It might be people switching spots (*if a large group*). Or maybe one person removes a jacket or puts hair up. Alternatively, hand one person a noisemaker and have him/her shake it for a few seconds, and then hide it. **Once the guesser's eyes are opened again, have them guess who had the noisemaker, or what changed within the circle.** (*Explain that in today's lesson we are going to talk about someone who could not see, and also about how God can change our lives.*)
- **Names matter:** Invite each person to select what name they would choose for themselves if they could change their name. Have them explain *why* they would choose that name, and *what it would mean*. Native Americans were allowed to change the names given them at birth when they were ready to enter the next stage of their maturity. Their new name would often be a reflection of what they wanted to be, a goal to achieve, or a personality strength seen by others or themselves. (*Explain that we are going to learn today about someone whose whole life changed, and even how we speak of him. Oftentimes in the Bible God changed people's names to add new meaning , like Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter...*).

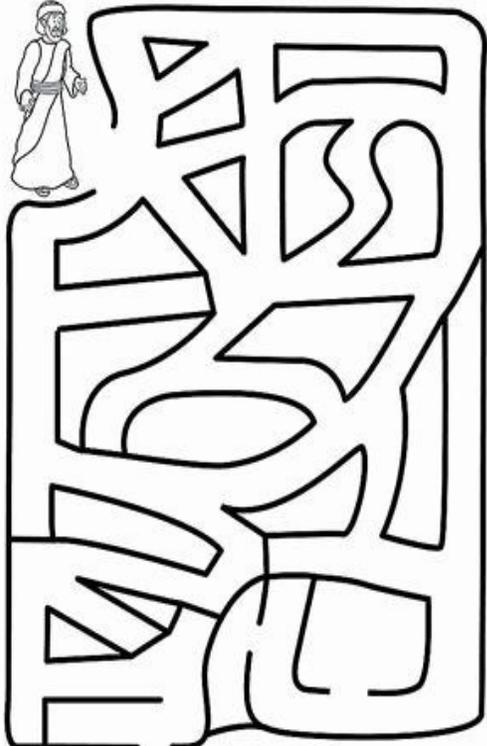
CHILDREN AND/OR GROUP OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Watch the Life Cycle of a Butterfly** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kZD6rISLUw>
(*Paul was transformed from Saul to Paul through God's grace when he said YES to God. You could say that he went through a TRANSFORMATION, just like a butterfly.*)
- **Craft: Prayer has the power to change**...have people create "prayer boxes", prayer jars, or prayer journals to remember people who need help, and how important prayer can be. Allow them to decorate it (*with crayons, markers, paper, wrapping paper, stickers, etc.*). Simple containers can be like coffee cans, tissue boxes, pencil boxes, or other

items. Or just use a spiral notebook with a decorated cover. Attach or write a special verse on it (*maybe one of our memory Verses*), along with papers for writing down requests and praises to put in. Be sure to date the prayer requests.

- Create a **prayer journal**, Put the date first, then write your prayer request, leaving a place to add the date the prayer was answered. Skip a line between the requests.
- **Watch together** “How to Forgive” @ <https://youtu.be/dHX85pHsVLk>

(a special thanks to Ministry-to-Children for many of these lesson ideas)

 <p>"Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?"</p> <p>Saul was _____ by a light from heaven. _____ spoke to Saul when he fell to the ground. Ananias was _____ of Saul, because he had harmed many believers. God told Ananias to go to a _____ where Saul was staying. Ananias _____ God.</p>	<p>Help Ananias find the house where Saul was staying .</p>  <p>Help Ananias find the house where Saul was staying .</p>
<p>Word Bank: house God obeyed blinded afraid</p>	



Ananias trusts God, and bravely helps Saul.