

Need leaders?

They could be right in front of you...



CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON:

ANANIAS, GOD'S OBEDIENT SERVANT

BACKGROUND: ACTS: 9:1-18 ● KEY PASSAGE: ACTS 9:10-11,17

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PURPOSE: To help children understand that following God's instruction brings about God's good purpose in the world for all people.

BIBLE STORY: Ananias, God's Obedient Servant

MEMORY VERSE: Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight. Matthew 12:18 (NIV)

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Read Acts 9:1-31, paying attention to the context of the passage. Note that while this is the record of Saul's conversion, the use of the name "Paul" does not appear in this chapter. This chapter in Acts is one of three accounts of Paul's conversion (see also chapters 22 and 26). The repetition of the event indicates its importance to Luke, the author of Acts. The conversion of Saul is a transformation from one who persecutes Christ and his followers to one who suffers for Christ and the church. His conversion is not only as a follower of Christ, but as an advocate and servant of God to share the gospel with the Gentile community.

Two visions occur in this chapter—first, Saul's vision following the event on the Damascus road; and second, Ananias' vision of God's call to help Saul. As a disciple of Jesus the Christ, Ananias was at first reluctant to go to Saul (he had heard of the persecution of believers by Saul), but more importantly Ananias demonstrated faithfulness to the Lord's call. He went and found Saul, and laying hands upon him, Saul's sight returned just as Saul had seen in his vision.

The focus of this lesson is on the discipleship of Ananias and the important and faithful role he played in Saul's conversion. Through the faithfulness of Ananias and the Lord, Saul became a believer and the instrument through which the name of Christ was shared throughout the Gentile world and ultimately throughout the entire world.

Reflect upon the response of Ananias. Consider how often we hear the word of God and choose not to respond out of our own fear or apathy. The role Ananias played in Saul's conversion is tantamount to the role we play in others hearing and receiving the gospel.

Also, reflect on Saul's response to his experience on the Damascus road. He did not dismiss the event as some strange occurrence, but upon arriving in Damascus, he began to pray to God. He heard the Lord; he prayed; he received a vision; he accepted the task given to him by God as the instrument through which the entire world would hear the Good News of Jesus the Christ, and he began the work of God as directed.

Does this account of Saul and Ananias repeat itself in our lives today? Have we heard the call of God, been reluctant, but followed through nonetheless? Have we experienced God's nudging and missed the opportunity through our reluctance? How might we help one another in journeying with Christ? How do we or could we share the gospel more powerfully with the Holy Spirit directing the way?

The focal point of this lesson is obedience to God in the way we serve God through helping others in this world. Affirm the children as they demonstrate obedience and helpfulness during the session today. Offer them ways of experiencing obedience, both when the task is easy and when it is difficult. Help the children recognize that sometimes, even often, it is difficult to do that which is "right" or difficult to "choose the better option."

Children make decisions every day, and as significant adults in their lives, we have a responsibility to help them contemplate and evaluate the better decisions. What makes one decision better than another – even when both actions might be o.k.? What processes do we use when making decisions? Although children are often in the stage of “right and wrong,” our role is to help them begin the process of evaluating decisions so that as they grow and mature, they will have the tools to evaluate major life decisions.

Saul’s conversion changed his life forever, just as our trust, belief, and acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior change our lives forever. Ananias’ decision gave him strength and courage to believe that God is present even in the most difficult and frightening tasks. Ananias learned that he was (and we are) a part of God’s plan for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

PREPARING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

1. Locate Bible pictures of various aspects of the Bible story – Saul journeying to Damascus, Saul on his knees on the Damascus road, Ananias before Saul, Ananias touching Saul, etc. Place on the focal wall, along with the title of the session, “Ananias, God’s Obedient Servant.”
2. Print the memory verse on 12”x18” construction paper and add to the focal wall.
3. Select worship music to have playing softly as children enter the room.
4. Secure from the church or public library 3 or 4 books about helping. These books might be Bible related or quality children’s books about helping. Place on a rug in an area of the room; a child or two might need a quiet place on arrival at the session.

PREPARATION FOR INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

1. For Simon Says: Choose the location for the activity – on the carpet, in a circle, in rows – and decide what will be the best for having children participant in this large group and physical activity. Focus on following instructions/obedience.
2. For Scavenger Hunt: Determine the number of small groups you will have. Have 1 adult for 5 to 6 children. Locate one camera (Polaroid or digital) for each group. If Polaroid, be sure to have film. If digital, you may want to show on a laptop or simply use the “review” on the digital camera. Copy the “Scavenger Hunt Activity Questions Sheet.” Provide a large piece of newsprint for each group to record answers to the questions used in the Scavenger Hunt activity. Have a copy of the questions for each group as well. Place paper, questions, and a marker at a table or space for each group to use on return to the classroom.

PREPARATION FOR BIBLE STUDY TIME (LARGE GROUP)

1. Create a large copy of the Question/Answer Match to use as a group.
2. Write each word of the memory verse on a separate index card. Shuffle the cards so they are not in order.

PREPARATION FOR APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

1. Provide a variety of colors of construction paper, glue for each child, and a piece of large beige, white, or black construction paper for each child to use to create a collage.
2. Make copies of the “Ananias and Saul Word Search” activity.

GUIDE TO THE LEARNING SESSION

I. SIMON SAYS (10 MINUTES) (LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY)

Children may join in as they arrive; have all children participate in this activity, letting it build from simple to more difficult instructions. This activity is a prelude to the second activity that will be small groups participating in a “scavenger hunt.”

“Simon Says” (or you may use your name in the game title). Give the children instructions according to their age and ability. If you have a small group, you may line them up in a row and give instructions that will move them all in the same direction. If you have a larger group, you may want to have multiple rows and direct them to perform actions that they can do in place.

Example from simple to more difficult:

Simon Says: Raise both hands

Simon Says: Raise both hands over your head

Simon Says: Raise both hands and place them behind your back

Simon Says: Lower both hands and place them behind your back.

Children enjoy being the leader in this activity as well. Change leaders as often as you want, if time allows for the activity.

EMPHASIS: following directions, being obedient.

As you finish playing the game, thank the children for listening and following directions.

2. SCAVENGER HUNT (10-15 MINUTES) (SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY WITH ALL CHILDREN PARTICIPATING)

- a. Divide the children in groups of 5 to 6: assign an adult to each group.
- b. Each group will need a Polaroid camera with film or a digital camera.
- c. Instruct the children to find objects or places in the church that give instructions.
Example – on the Communion Table we often see the words, “Do this in remembrance of me.”
- d. When the children return (having used all the film and shared in the taking of pictures) have them write, as a group, answers to the following questions:
 1. Why did you choose to take this picture?
 2. What instructions or directions does the picture represent?
 3. Who are the instructions given to? individuals? the entire church?

3. TRANSITION TO LARGE GROUP (3 MINUTES)

Gather the children in the large group. Have each small group share their pictures and their responses to the questions from the scavenger hunt. Did the groups find the same instructions or different instructions? Compare their findings and make a complete list of their findings on instructions and ways of being obedient to God.

4. BIBLE STUDY TIME (20 MINUTES)

As the group is already gathered, the “scavenger hunt sharing” will serve as the transition into the Bible Study time. Share with the children that God’s instructions come to us in many ways. For Saul, they came as a voice from heaven. Sometimes we hear God’s instructions through teachers, preachers, parents, and also our friends. At other times, we read God’s instructions in the Bible and in our Bible study lessons. Are there other ways we hear, see, or experience God’s instructions? Give the children a few minutes to think about it. Have one or two share and then move on to the story.

Say, “During our Bible study, listen for the ways God gave instructions to Ananias and Saul. I will ask you questions at the end of the Bible story.”

TELL THE STORY: Open your Bible to Acts 9 and tell the following story (older children may volunteer to take turns reading the story aloud from their own Bibles for the group to hear).

ANANIAS, GOD’S OBEDIENT SERVANT (BASED ON ACTS 9:1-18)

Ananias was a servant of God, a disciple of Jesus. He lived in the city of Damascus, not too far from Jerusalem, and shared his faith and his knowledge about Jesus and the miracles that Jesus had performed. He was a good and faithful and obedient disciple. God was getting ready to use him in a very important way.

At the same time, there was a man named Saul. Saul was a Jewish man, like Jesus, but he did not believe that Jesus really was the Son of God or that Jesus was the one to teach us about God's love and care for us. In fact, Saul believed that Jesus was bad. He believed Jesus was corrupting the beliefs of the Jewish people and that anyone who believed in Jesus should be punished.

One day Saul, a zealous and passionate young man, set out with his friends to travel from Jerusalem to Damascus. Along the way, as they were talking and joking about the punishments they would impose on the followers of Jesus, a bright and blinding light appeared from the sky, and a voice was heard saying, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" And Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." Saul was blinded by the bright light. His fellow travelers helped him to make his way to Damascus. Being a faithful Jew, Saul began to pray, asking God to tell him what he needed to do. Saul was not prepared to hear the word of God, but he listened. God told him a man named Ananias, a disciple of Jesus, would come to help him.

Now Ananias, the faithful servant of God and disciple of Jesus, had a vision about the same time. God told Ananias to go to Saul and lay his hands upon him so that Saul's eyesight could be restored. Ananias was afraid of Saul because Saul was known to punish, persecute, and even cause the death of the followers of Jesus. Ananias reluctantly did as God instructed him. Ananias was not met with persecution but acceptance when he entered Saul's room.

Saul had changed in those few short days. He understood that Jesus was not only important, but the Son of God. That Jesus was the Messiah. When Ananias came to Saul and laid hands on him, scales fell from his eyes and Saul could see again. Ananias told Saul that he was to be baptized, and that he had been chosen by Jesus to share the Good News of Jesus the Christ with the Gentile community and the entire world.

Pause (for at least 8 seconds), allowing the children to realize that the Bible story is complete and to allow the children to respond emotionally and mentally to the story. Scan the group of children, looking into their eyes, as you pause.

5. REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY by asking the following questions. Give these directions before reviewing: "You may select a buddy to help you answer the questions. I will ask the question; then turn to your buddy and quietly discuss (whisper to each other) the answer. When you think you know the correct answer, stand up with your buddy. Don't offer the answer until called upon! Everyone understand our process?"

1. Who are the people in the story?

A: Saul, Ananias, the voice of God/Jesus, men traveling with Saul

2. What was the "strange occurrence" on the road to Damascus?

A: Bright light and a voice from heaven

3. Who heard the voice?

A: Saul and the men who were traveling with him

4. What happened to Saul?

A: temporarily blinded

5. How did Saul respond?

A: continued on to Damascus with help and prayed

6. Who is Ananias?

A: a follower of Jesus

7. What did God tell Ananias to do?

A: to help Saul by going to him and placing his hands on him for healing

8. How did Ananias feel about God's instruction?

A: he was reluctant, scared

9. How did he respond?

A: he obeyed God

6. APPLICATION

What do you think might have happened if Ananias had refused to help Saul? What do you think might have happened if Saul had refused to listen to God's instruction? What might have happened if the men traveling with Saul had been so frightened that they had run away and left Saul in the middle of the road? What do you think happened to Saul's friends?

When was a time you were obedient to your parents, teachers, grandparents? What happened? When were you disobedient? What happened? How do you know when to be obedient? When should you not be obedient or follow instructions?

7. LEARN A VERSE

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 12:18. Help the children who are having difficulty finding the verse. Encourage them to help one another. Encourage them to use the table of contents. Read the verse together. To whom does the verse refer? Why is God delighted? What do you think that you do or don't do that delights God? How can our church delight God? Can you name some times when you knew that you had delighted God? Using the pre-printed index cards, give one to each child. Have the children put the words in order and read together.

8. PRAY

9. APPLICATION ACTIVITIES (15 MINUTES) (CHILDREN CHOOSE ONE)

1. Helping Hands Collage:

Remind the children that being obedient to God means that we help others. Allow the children to trace around their hands and cut out the shapes. Encourage the children to identify ways they help or are obedient and write (or draw) these ways on their handprints. Encourage them to complete 4 or 5 handprints. They may glue their handprints to the construction paper to create a collage. Encourage them to hang the collage on their refrigerators or in their bedrooms as reminders to be like Ananias and to follow God's instruction, even when afraid.

Ask the children what it means to help someone they do not like (you may want to use the word enemy). Help the children write those answers as well. Talk about the importance of helping others no matter who they are. We are to show kindness to our neighbor, treating our neighbor as our self. Is this an easy task? By no means, but if we model kindness, we help others to show kindness as well. We are obedient to God's mandate to love God and love others as ourselves when we help one another.

2. Ananias and Saul Word Search

Help the children locate the words embedded in the word search. Words may be read from left to right, from bottom to top, and on the diagonal.