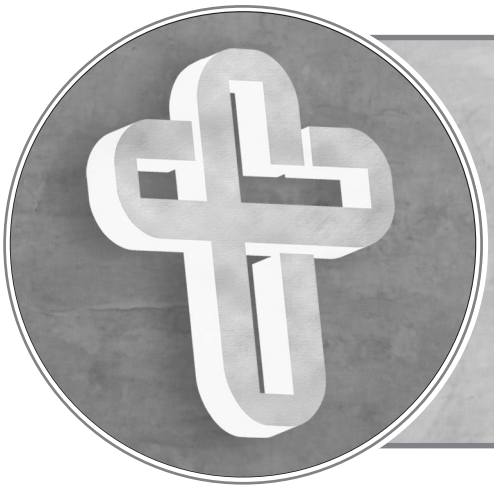


CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY 14 2026

go the distance

Scripture Story: Acts 9:1-18.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 12-14.
Key Text: Philippians 3:13, 14.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Saul. Paul. The names alone almost write the story for us. They describe one man who lived two distinctly different lives. The apostle Paul is revered today, and rightly so, for helping to engineer the foundation of the Christian church. It is his letters, his life experiences, his holy boldness that gave shape to the faith.

Yet long before this titan of the faith set about his mission, he was on another. In his former life he is described as "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" (Acts 9:1, NIV). It would have been wonderful for the ancient church if Saul had been only a heavy breather, but there was much more to him. He presided over the murder of Stephen and many other believers. He was sincere in his efforts to rid the world of these troublesome followers of Jesus, but he was sincerely wrong.

This point is one to be emphasized as the lesson is taught. Sometimes we can be quite wrong in our assessment of another's faith, so we should not be swift to condemn anyone. We must be led by God's Word and the Holy Spirit in all our interactions with people of differing faiths.

Saul's work of destruction was so thorough and efficient that Jesus had to arrest him, change his name, and set him on a different course. The journey begun at the Damascus road meeting with Jesus was a miracle of epic proportions. God took the man most dedicated to destroying His church and turned him into its chief exponent. This is what Christ wants to do in the life of all who accept conviction and submit their life to Him. When Paul sees Jesus face to face, his journey will be complete.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Discover that God has a unique purpose and destiny for their lives. *(Know)*
- Be challenged to begin their journey with God and grow in grace with Him. *(Feel)*
- Share their new walk with God with others who are searching for God's leading in their lives. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Holy Scriptures, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 1

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration. The inspired authors spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history (Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

The objective of this activity is to get the students to think about what it takes to reach the prize for which one is striving. Every Olympic athlete we see on the world stage is one who has been training for many years to maximize the moment. Through the application of certain principles and hard work, they are transformed, able to pursue their dream of sport success.

In the Christian life there's a goal to be won, a prize worth striving for, and that prize is God, poured out in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul used many sports metaphors to make points about the Christian's journey to God. While life is not a game, we can learn much from those who dedicate their lives to achieving a dream.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"A devoted Christian, Dave Dravecky entrusted his life to God every morning. When a cancerous tumor in his arm threatened to cut short his career, Dave did not demand to be healed. Instead, he committed himself to God's will, and his quiet faith was a witness to millions.

"God worked a miracle for Dave Dravecky. Although his cancer operation required the removal of muscle that he used for pitching, against all odds he came back to play again. Thousands of San Francisco fans cheered wildly when he took the mound again at Candlestick Park. Incredibly, he even won the game. . . .

"But the comeback miracle lasted less than a week. Dave was playing in Montreal, winning the game, when suddenly, as he pitched, his arm broke. He collapsed in a heap at the foot of the mound. The whole crowd heard that awful snap of the bone.

"As they carried Dave off the field he quietly affirmed his faith in God. That faith did not waver during long months of uncertainty. Finally, doctors determined that they had no choice but to amputate his arm, and they did.

"Did Dave become bitter when God did not heal him . . . ? Not at all. Secular sports writers around the country marveled at his faith, solid as a rock. . . . God displayed a miracle greater than physical healing in the amazing display of Dave's contented commitment.

"The apostle Paul experienced this rock-solid faith. He too suffered from an incurable physical affliction. Three times he asked God to miraculously heal him. God's response was plain. 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9, NKJV). Paul's answer is remarkable: 'I will rather boast in my infirmities. . . . I take pleasure . . . in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong' (verses 9, 10, NKJV). . . .

"Like Dave Dravecky and the apostle Paul, God invites us to hang on to Him today with the hand of faith" (Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* pp. 158, 159).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

When we consider that Saul was persecuting God's church while claiming to be a part of God's family, it gives us pause. It was the Damascus road meeting with Jesus that started Paul's transformation. For the first time he saw how much his behavior was hurting Jesus. He wanted to be transformed. He no longer wanted to accept his life as it had been. That's the effect that Jesus has on those who look into His face.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them:*

The apostle Paul is one of the most famous Bible characters. Next to Jesus, he is perhaps the most widely quoted of all biblical writers. Most kids will know something of Paul's life story—his brushes with death, breaking out of jail by earthquake, being bitten by snakes, whippings, and so on. However, most of your students may not know about Paul's former life. Spend some time detailing his former exploits to give the backdrop to his awesome conversion.

Barnabas plays a very critical role in ushering Paul into his ministry. Barnabas' name means "son of consolation," and he truly lives up to his name. He is willing to put his reputation and "street cred" on the line to protect Paul. Ananias also comes in for high praise for

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Go Where They Are

If your students are members of the Facebook social network, consider sending them a message during the week preceding this lesson. Ask each of them to send you a three-sentence note describing the moment when they first accepted Jesus into their heart. Ask them to share the time and place where their transformation began. Note: not all kids will have done this, so be sure to include something in the note that lets all the kids know the responses are totally voluntary.

When you get to class, choose one or two notes to share. Ask the writers for permission to share their testimony, or better yet, ask them if they'd like to do it themselves.

his willingness to listen to God when He tells him to go to Saul. This gives us some idea of just how scary a person Saul was before his conversion experience.

Notice that Jesus is central to Paul's conversion, acceptance by the church brethren, and entry into ministry. Jesus is with Paul every step of the way, growing him into the man he was designed to be.

You may want to highlight the fact that Paul's physical blindness followed his spiritual blindness. Blindness forces one to concentrate the mind. It heightens the other human senses. Perhaps Jesus wanted Paul to focus exclusively on Him without any distractions. This take-charge man who seemed to be indestructible was totally and completely helpless. He had to trust God.

Use the following as other teachable passages that relate to today's story: Psalm 51; Mark 5:1-15; John 4:17-29; Isaiah 30:15.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Long Time Coming. As is often the case, what seems like a momentary occurrence is a long time in the making. Ellen White notes that God had been trying for some time to get through to Saul. He was convicted by Stephen's sermon before the Jewish council. Sometimes he would toss and turn all night, fighting against the conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 116, 117).

When Jesus finally spoke to Saul for the first time with His own voice, it was the culmination of a long effort to meet with Saul. Now Jesus had his undivided attention.

2. Baptized With the Spirit. Jesus directed Ananias to lay his hand on Saul that he might be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This baptism occurred about three days after Saul's Damascus road encounter with

Teaching From the Lesson

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite students to share the Key Text *with the class if they have committed it to memory.*
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Acts of the Apostles. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Jesus. Saul had accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, but he still needed the filling of the Holy Spirit to make the work of Christ effectual in his life.

Before leaving His disciples, Jesus made this promise: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you" (John 16:13-15, NIV).

The work of growing up into Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul needed the Spirit to fit him for his life's work, and so do we.

3. Start Now. One of the beautiful parts of Paul's transformation narrative is his immediate willingness to begin working for Christ. He is not careful to move slowly into ministry; he jumps in with both feet. Acts 9:19, 20 tells us that after he had broken his three-day fast, he immediately preached about Jesus in synagogues that He was the Son of God. One can only imagine the effect that the sight of Paul must have had on the congregants.

There's an important point here. People who accept Jesus as their Savior must be allowed to engage in the work of leading others to Christ. They must not be given certain responsibilities until they are knowledgeable and grounded enough to meet those tasks, but they should not be held back from opportunities to tell their story.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Invite the students to sit quietly with their eyes closed. Ask them to think of one change they'd like God to make in their lives. Tell them to focus on something that would help them to have a deeper relationship with God. Ask the students to pray silently for God's help to make the change they seek.

After a minute or so, close with a prayer of thanks to God for answers to your prayers.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God is on a mission to save all humanity from the ravages of sin. In truth, He has already done so. God went the distance, the extra mile, when sent His Son Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Salvation is free and available to all who accept it.

The apostle Paul accepted Jesus' call to a new life. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he set about to fulfill the destiny that God had outlined for him. From a life driven by destruction God created a life driven by love. Paul walked with Jesus until they two became one and he could exclaim: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21, NIV).

One day if we're faithful, we will see Paul in heaven. We will be able to ask him whether the journey was worth all that he suffered. Perhaps his answer will be the same as it was when he wrote to the fledgling Roman church: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18, NIV).



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 12-14.

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

FEBRUARY 14 2026

STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Acts 9:1-18.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 12-14.

go the distance



Photo by Terrill Thomas

keytext

"Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 3:13, 14, NIV)

flashlight

"In the record of the conversion of Saul important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. Saul was brought directly into the presence of Christ. He was one whom Christ intended for a most important work, one who was to be a 'chosen vessel' unto Him; yet the Lord did not at once tell him of the work that had been assigned him. He arrested him in his course and convicted him of sin; but when Saul asked, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' the Savior placed the inquiring Jew in connection with His church, there to obtain a knowledge of God's will concerning him" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 120).

what do you think?

The 2026 Winter Olympics are being held from February 4-20, in Beijing, China. It is a showcase of amazing athletes, all of whom spent years honing their skills in preparation for this moment—their moment.

On a scale from 1 (absolutely essential) to 5 (not too essential), rank the following items in terms of their importance to an athlete when preparing for success in Beijing.

____ rest
____ a healthy diet
____ dreams and goals
____ practice
____ determination

did you know?

Did you know that the apostle Paul traveled and shared the good news about salvation through Jesus in ancient Greece? Paul was particularly familiar with the sporting events of the Greeks. In fact, no other Bible character used as many sports metaphors to describe his journey with God and that of others. For instance, as he neared the end of his life he wrote this to a young follower named Timothy: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7, NKJV).

INTO THE STORY

"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. 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.

"In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'

"'Yes, Lord,' he answered.

"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. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'

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

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

"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.'

"Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized."

(Acts 9:1-18, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Mark the parts of this amazing story of transformation that are new to you. Had you ever heard of Paul, the man who shared the love of Jesus throughout the ancient Roman Empire? If so, what most stuck in your mind about him?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What was Paul doing before God stopped him on his way to Damascus? What words are used to describe him?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Who are some of the other players in this drama? What are their roles? For instance, what is Barnabas doing for Paul? What about Ananias?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How did people who knew Saul before his conversion experience react to him afterward? Did this discourage Saul?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What does this biblical episode teach us about Jesus?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why do you think God struck Saul with a temporary case of blindness?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life" **(John 6:63, NIV).**

"He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way" **(Psalm 25:9, NIV).**

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" **(Romans 12:1, 2, NIV).**

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" **(Isaiah 30:21, NIV).**

"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" **(Proverbs 28:13, NIV).**

further insight

"The prayers of the penitent Pharisee were not in vain. The inmost thoughts and emotions of his heart were transformed by divine grace; and his nobler faculties were brought into harmony with the eternal purposes of God."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 120

Sabbath

Read John 6:63.

Complete this week's *What Do You Think*? activity. How did you rank the items listed? Which was most important to you? When an athlete has all five items working in their lives, they are poised for greatness. Spiritual transformations are not much different. They require certain items such as a call to change, acceptance of Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, a vision of a new life in Christ, a desire to please God, prayer, Bible study, and faith sharing—to name a few.

Which of the items above is most important in one's journey to transformation? Explain.

_____

_____

Now read John 10:9 to find the answer. This is the door that Paul used to begin his journey.

Sunday

Read Psalm 25:9.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, complete the Out of the Story questions. After reading this powerful episode, one has to wonder why Jesus would bother with someone who was against His followers.

From what you've read so far about Paul in this week's lesson, share in your own words what you believe Jesus saw in him. What qualities did he possess that God wanted to use?

_____

_____

What does Paul's story teach us about God's ability to change people, no matter what they've done?

Monday

Read Philippians 3:13, 14.

This Sabbath's *Key Text* is taken from one of Paul's fantastic letters. In it he writes to members of the Christian church in a place called Philippi, in ancient Greece. Note his use of a sports metaphor here again. He presses toward the prize, conscious that he hasn't attained it as yet.

Hidden in this Scripture is a very important skill that runners have to master. Read the Key Text again and write what you think the skill is and how it pertains to to the Christian life.

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 28:13.

This week's *Flashlight* quotation is quite powerful. For instance, we are told that God was working to convert Saul because he was a "chosen vessel." But chosen for what? That must have been on Saul's mind when his world turned upside down on the road to Damascus.

God had to prepare Paul for a special ministry. Part of that preparation required him to be a part of a church family, as the quotation notes. In your own words, explain why you believe God felt that Paul needed a church family, a group of like-minded believers.

_____

_____

Wednesday

Read this week's *Punch Lines*. Choose one or more to commit to memory today.

One of the truly beautiful parts of Paul's transformation was his willingness to submit himself totally to Jesus Christ, the kind of submission mentioned in the Romans 12:1, 2 Punch Line. But Paul went even further. His desire to know Jesus was so strong that he immersed himself in the Bible that he had, which largely consisted of the Old Testament. Paul wanted to grow to become all that God wanted him to be.

Years later Paul wrote to the Philippians about how he lived his life. Read Philippians 1:21. How did Paul describe his life?

_____

_____

By surrendering like Paul, you can be transformed by the power of Jesus Christ in your life today.

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 4:8 and Romans 8:38, 39.

It would be nice to think that Paul's life after transformation was easy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Read 2 Corinthians 11:25-28. Why was Paul willing to endure so many trials? Why didn't he give up?

_____

_____

Revisit today's reading in 2 Timothy 4:8 and Romans 8:38, 39 to find out the secret of Paul's strength. God offers you the same strength for the challenges you face in life.

Friday

Read Isaiah 30:21.

Are you headed down the wrong path in life? Do you want God to put you on the path that He designed for you? Why not take a moment and pray, asking God to do that for you right now? Don't worry about saying a bunch of fancy words to God. Just ask God the same question that Paul asked Him: What do You want me to do?

God will lead you to your destiny! Keep trusting Him (Jeremiah 29:11).

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 12-14.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.