

The Man Who Made Trouble



1

Before you begin, please read the introduction on the right to yourself.

2

With the help of your child, prepare the meeting space. Pull out your Bible, light some candles, and add any other decoration you'd like to make the space beautiful.

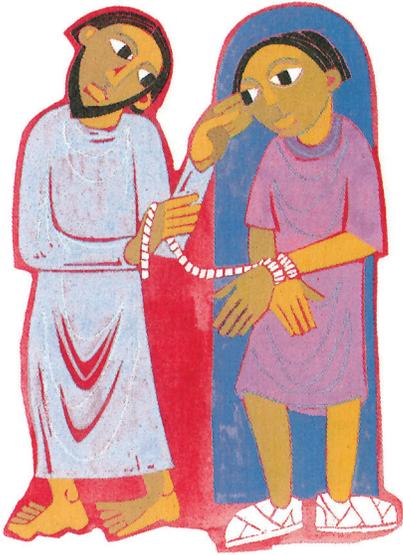
Then begin with a prayer.

3

Getting started. Discuss together: What does it mean to get a second chance? Do you ever wish you could get a second chance so you could change something or improve something?

The story of Paul's conversion is in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Saul we read about early in Acts is certainly different from the Paul of the later chapters or the Paul we know through his letters in the New Testament! The difference is Paul's acceptance of Jesus' loving forgiveness, even after he had imprisoned Jesus' followers.

Read the story below out loud. If your child is old enough, he or she can read it to you. Otherwise, read it to your child. Along the way, clarify anything your child might not understand.



A long, long time ago, there lived a man named Saul. He lived in Jerusalem when the Church was just beginning. Saul did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He thought that the followers of Jesus were being disrespectful to God when they preached the Good News. Saul wanted to get rid of all of Jesus' friends.

Saul worked for the Council of Jerusalem. His job was to make trouble for the early Christians. Saul went from house to house, arresting the men and women who believed in Jesus. Saul worked as hard as he could to get rid of all the Christians in the city. The followers of Jesus were afraid of Saul.

When Saul had arrested or chased almost all of the Christians out of Jerusalem, he went back to the Council. "I have done such a good job," he said. "Let me go to Damascus and get rid of the Jesus followers who live there. I'll find them all and put them in jail." The Council gave him permission, and off Saul went.



Damascus was a long way from Jerusalem. Saul traveled for days and days. "I'll show those troublemakers," thought Saul. "Those Jesus followers will not have a chance to escape." Saul could not wait to get to Damascus.

Then something absolutely amazing happened. When Saul was just outside the city, a great, blazing light came shooting down from heaven! Before he knew what happened, Saul found himself flat on the ground. He was surrounded by the light.

As Saul lay in the middle of the road he heard a voice. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" the voice asked.

Saul was really afraid. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Jesus, and you are persecuting me," the voice answered. "Get up now and go into the city. You will be told what to do."

Saul got up from the ground. He felt sick. He rubbed his eyes. He blinked

and squinted. He opened his eyes as wide as he could. But Saul could not see. He was blind!

The men who were with Saul took him by the hand. They led him into the city. For three days Saul could not eat or drink anything. Saul knew that it was Jesus who had spoken to him. “What they are saying must be true,” Saul thought. “This Jesus who was crucified is somehow still alive. He has beaten death. He must surely be the Messiah.”

Saul prayed and prayed. He must have felt very sorry for hurting so many of Jesus’ friends. Finally, on the third day, Saul had a visitor.

Saul’s visitor was a man named Ananias. Ananias was a follower of Jesus. Jesus had spoken to Ananias in a vision. Jesus told him that he was to go to a certain house on Straight Street. Jesus said, “When you get there you will find a man called Saul. I want you to put your hands on him so that he can see again.”

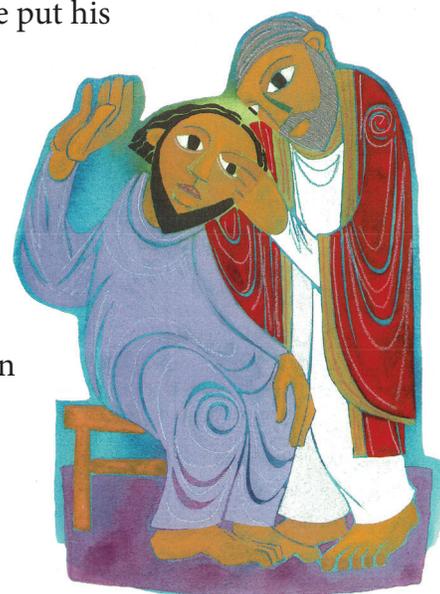
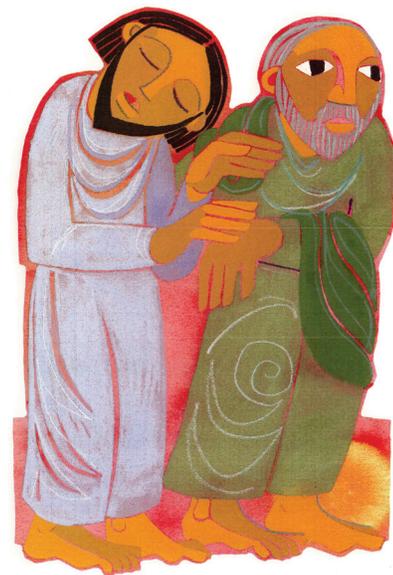
Ananias was afraid. He had heard all about Saul. “Lord,” Ananias said, “people have told me about this man named Saul. He has come to our city to make trouble for your followers. If I go there he will arrest me.”

Jesus said to Ananias, “I know you are afraid, but you still must go. I have big plans for Saul. He is going to help people from all over the world to know me.” So Ananias went to Straight Street.

As soon as Ananias entered the house, he went up to Saul. He put his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, I have been sent by Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here. I have been sent so that you can see again. I have been sent so that you may receive the Holy Spirit.”

At that very second Saul could see again. He was baptized there and then. After he ate a little food, Saul began to feel strong again. In a few days, Saul began to preach. “Jesus is the Son of God,” he said to anyone who would listen.

God forgave Saul, who had spent so much time making trouble for Jesus’ friends. And Saul went on to become one of Jesus’ best disciples. As Saul began to preach in other parts of the world people began to call him by his Roman name, Paul. He



traveled everywhere telling people his story. He would tell them how good and forgiving God was. He would tell them about Jesus, who had died and risen from the dead. Paul would tell everyone he met all about the Good News.

God called Paul. Paul listened and answered. The great and Holy Spirit was not just with Paul, the Spirit was also in Paul. Paul let the Spirit move him and great things happened.

1

Now discuss the story with your child. Use the following or other questions:

1. What is your favorite part of the story? Why?
2. If you had been Ananias, what would you have thought about Paul? What would you have done? Why?
3. How do you think Paul felt when he knew he had been wrong to imprison the Christians? Pretend you are Paul. What would you say to the Christians? What would you say to the people in Jerusalem who sent you to capture the Christians?

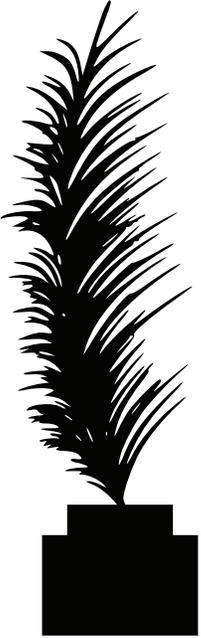
2

Read aloud the directions on the next page to get your child started on their activity. Then continue to read below.

3

Just for you: Each of us sometimes does wrong and must ask for forgiveness.

If Paul can change from an angry persecutor to a powerful preacher, think how much can happen through the power of the Spirit! We all get second chances; we all get to begin again. This is a wonderful and liberating truth of our faith. God will always forgive us our sins because God is always ready to love us. Sin blinds us, just as Paul was blind, but forgiveness makes us well. It is not without good reason that we recognize Reconciliation as a Sacrament of Healing.



Paul Says He Is Sorry

We know that there are three things we need to say when we tell God we are sorry for the things we have done that are hurtful. These three things need to be a part of every Sorry Prayer:

1. Tell God what we are sorry for.
2. Tell God we will do our best not to do this hurtful thing again.
3. Ask God to help us to do the right thing from now on.

Pretend that you are Saint Paul. He must have felt very sorry for having caused so much trouble for Jesus' friends. He must have been sorry for hurting them and putting them in jail. In the space below write a Sorry Prayer for Saint Paul. Remember to include all three parts of the Sorry Prayer that you find above.

A large, light brown, torn-edge paper area with ten horizontal lines for writing, intended for the student to write a Sorry Prayer for Saint Paul.

Saying 'I'm Sorry' and Being Forgiven

1

Help your child get started on their activity on the next page, and then continue to the next step.

2

Just for you: If we never have the experience of being forgiven, how will we be able to forgive others? Answer the reflection questions below.

Reflection Questions

To prepare for the closing prayer service, look back at the circles of hurt from the last session. Using these "sins" as your guide, finish these sentences:

"I'm sorry _____."

"We need you God, to _____."

"I will never again _____."



My Sorry Prayer

Think about something you may have done either in your family or outside of your family that could hurt someone. In the space below write down your own Sorry Prayer. Remember to include the three important parts of the prayer.



Tell God what you are sorry for.



Tell God you will do your best not to do it again.



Ask God to help you not to do the same thing again.

Forgiveness and Second Chances

1

Visit whatever space is used for Reconciliation at your church, if it is accessible. Explain to your child how the process works and share your own experience of what it is like to be forgiven.

2

Talk about some of the programs in your community that offer people a second chance (such as halfway houses, hospitals, Twelve Step programs, soup kitchens). Visit one if possible, and talk to a volunteer there about forgiveness and second chances.

Closing Ritual

3

Be open to the reality that we can *all* experience forgiveness because our loving God is waiting for us to come home. Come together with your young person to share this prayer service.

Prayer of Reconciliation

Opening Prayer:

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Reading:

Mark 2:5-12

Response:

There are many stories of Jesus forgiving people when others don't think he should. But Jesus never hesitates to forgive people. Take a minute of silence to ask Jesus in your heart for forgiveness for something you did (or didn't do) that hurt someone.

Prayer of Sorrow:

(*Adult leads; young person responds “Amen.”*)

“God of loving mercy,
we are not perfect people,
but we are trying to be your followers.

Help us to admit when we do wrong.
Lead us to reconcile with others.
Guide us to healing the world
with your justice and peace.

We ask all this through, with,
and in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.”

Sign of Peace:

Close by exchanging a sign of Christ's peace.

