

# ANYONE CAN BE FORGIVEN

## LESSON 4

### LEADER PREP

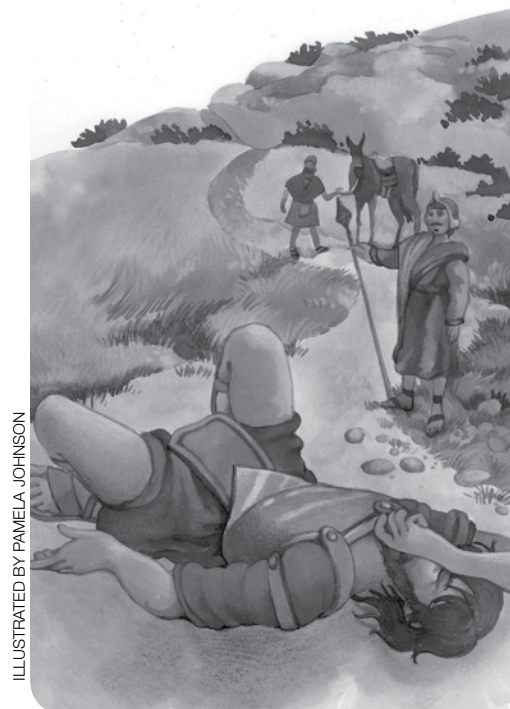
Acts 9:1-19

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

Saul wasn't a nice guy. He treated Christians terribly, putting them into prison or even having them stoned to death. But on the road to Damascus, God blinded Saul and spoke to him. Through God's forgiveness and grace, the trajectory of Saul's life completely changed. Use this lesson to help children learn that anyone can be forgiven.

**FORGIVENESS IS...**  
trusting God to  
help me love others  
who hurt me.

WHAT KIDS DO	WHAT YOU'LL NEED
<b>God Sightings</b> (5 minutes) Talk about ways they've seen God at work.	
<b>Explore the Bible!</b> (10 minutes) Use balloons to illustrate Saul's conversion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bible</li> <li>• round balloons of 2 different sizes and colors</li> <li>• clear tape</li> <li>• pins</li> </ul>
<b>Stone Shoe</b> (10 minutes) Experience what receiving forgiveness feels like.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bible</li> <li>• small stones</li> </ul>
<b>Good Deeds?</b> (10 minutes) Consider whether good deeds can free them from sin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bible</li> <li>• pens or pencils</li> <li>• copies of the handout (found at the end of this lesson)</li> </ul>
<b>Piling On the Sins</b> (10 minutes) See how sin weighs us down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pile of clothes (hats, gloves, sweaters, coats, and so on)</li> </ul>
<b>Live It!</b> (10 minutes) Watch a video about forgiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Grow Together Now</i> DVD</li> <li>• DVD player</li> </ul>



ILLUSTRATED BY PAMELA JOHNSON

\*Photocopy the Take-Home page at the end of this lesson for each child.

# DEVOTIONS FOR LEADERS: FORGIVENESS

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Saul certainly seemed to be an unlikely candidate for salvation. Good thing God thought differently! Jesus was the only way a man like Saul could've received forgiveness. Too often we overlook people who may seem "beyond" the reach of God's mercy and forgiveness. As you prepare for this lesson, ask God to open your eyes to people in your world who need the gift of God's grace. Remember that, no matter who they are, no matter what they've done, they can still be forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection.

## BIBLE BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

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### *Acts 9:1-19: Saul's Conversion on the Road to Damascus*

#### **A BLINDING LIGHT**

Prior to his conversion, Saul was a zealous Jew. He did all he could to oppose the name of Jesus, even putting many Christians in prison and casting his vote to put Christians to death (Acts 26:9-11). As Saul traveled to Damascus to arrest Christians, Jesus met him on the road. A light "brighter than the sun" (Acts 26:13) flashed from heaven, and Saul dropped to the ground. When Jesus questioned Saul and told Saul who he was, the truth of all Saul had been denying must've swept through him like a flood. In his zeal for God, Saul had been persecuting those who believed in Jesus, God's own Son! When Saul got up from that confrontation, he found that he was blind and needed assistance the rest of the way to Damascus.

#### **DAYS OF DARKNESS**

We can only speculate on what went through Saul's mind as he waited, blind, in Damascus for further instructions. God gave Saul time to think, and after three days, God sent a man named Ananias to heal Saul of his blindness (Acts 9:10-18).

#### **A BIG CHANGE**

Why did God choose Saul? God could've used anyone. Perhaps he chose Saul to be a supreme example of how a life can be changed when God enters it. This man went on to write a large portion of



the New Testament under his new name—Paul. Although Saul was his Jewish name, Paul was the Roman equivalent by which he became better known.

## THE LESSON

### GOD SIGHTINGS

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Use the standard text provided or substitute your own examples for this weekly lesson-starter activity.

**Say: God is with us everywhere! When your friend shares with you, you feel God's kindness. When you smile at a stranger and hold open a door, you're being God at work. A beautiful sunset is evidence of God's creativity and power. It's important that we recognize and thank God for all the things he does in our lives. We call these God Sightings.**

**Ask: What evidence have you seen of God at work this week? Think about God's creation, ways people have encouraged you, and even ways God helped you make a difference for someone else.**

Share your own God Sighting first. Then let kids share God Sightings—evidence of God in our world. Then celebrate how God is at work in your lives through a prayer of thanksgiving.

## YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Bible**
- ✓ **round balloons of 2 different sizes and colors** (see Leader Prep box)
- ✓ **clear tape**
- ✓ **pins**

## WARNING

Children under 8 years of age can choke on uninflated balloons. Adult supervision required. Discard broken balloons at once. Balloons contain latex, so be aware of any latex allergies in your class..

## LEADER PREP

Use a pencil to push a darker colored balloon inside a lighter colored balloon. Leave about 1 inch of the end of the inner balloon protruding from the outside balloon, and inflate the inside balloon. When the inside balloon has been inflated, tie it off and use the pencil to poke the end into the outer balloon. Inflate the outer balloon so that the sides of the balloons aren't touching, and tie it off. Make an "X" on each outer balloon with clear tape. You'll need one set of these balloons for each child.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE!

Say: **The Bible tells us about a man named Saul who didn't like Christians at all.** Explain that the balloons represent Saul. **Saul found ways to hurt people who believed in Jesus. He even put some Christians in jail!** Read aloud Acts 9:1-2.

**One day, Saul was on his way to the town of Damascus. Suddenly, a bright light from heaven shone on him and a voice spoke to him.** Hand a pin to each child and explain that it represents God. **The voice was God's and told Saul that when Saul hurt Christians, he hurt God, too.**

Read aloud Acts 9:3-19. Say: **Saul was so happy! He believed in Jesus right then, and God forgave him all his sins.**

Have children stick a pin through the tape on the outer balloon. Only the inner balloon will pop. Say: **Saul was a completely changed person! The old Saul was gone, and a new Saul took over!**

Lead this discussion: **What did you think when the inside balloon popped and changed the way the outside balloon looked? How was the way the balloon changed like how Saul changed when God forgave him? How does God's forgiveness change us from the inside out?**

Say: **When Saul was forgiven, he was changed, too. God sent Jesus to die for our sins, and we can accept His forgiveness just as Saul did. Saul learned that *anyone can be forgiven.***

# STONE SHOE

Have kids form pairs or trios. Then read Acts 9:17-18 aloud.

Say: **When Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Jesus changed him. Tell a partner about some ways Jesus has changed you.** Give an example from your own life; then allow time for pairs to share.

Distribute small stones, several per person, and instruct kids to put the stones in their shoes and put their shoes back on. Do the activity with kids; put stones in your shoes as well.

Say: **Now follow these directions.**

- **Stand on one foot.**
- **Walk in a little circle.**
- **Stand on your tiptoes.**
- **Take three steps forward.**
- **Slide to the left.**
- **Crouch and touch the floor.**
- **Take four steps backward.**

**Now take off your shoes, remove the stones, and let's do this again.** Repeat the directions.

Lead this discussion: **What was it like following the directions the first time with the stones? How about the second time? How was taking the stones out of your shoes like receiving forgiveness?**

Talk about: **The activity wasn't very much fun the first time—the stones made it too uncomfortable! And having sin in our life is just like that. Jesus knew that sin was uncomfortable and we needed his forgiveness. That's why he came to earth to die for us! Because of Jesus, *anyone can be forgiven.***

## YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Bible**
- ✓ **small stones**





## YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Bible**
- ✓ **copies of the handout**  
(found at the end of this lesson)
- ✓ **pens or pencils**

## GOOD DEEDS?

Distribute handouts and pens or pencils.

Say: **We all need forgiveness because we all mess up. No one is perfect. That's why God sent Jesus to die for us. In the box on your handout, draw or write a sin someone might commit.** Allow time for kids to write or draw.

Then read aloud John 3:16. Talk about: **What does this verse mean to you?**

Say: **Everyone has sin and needs to be forgiven. But some people go about trying to get forgiveness the wrong way. Think of some good deeds that people might do to get forgiveness. Now write them over the words or picture you drew, so they cover it.**

Allow time. Then lead this discussion: **When you look at your box, do you think the good deeds really cover up or erase the sin? Explain. If these good deeds could wipe away our sin, why did Jesus have to die? Why do you think people can't erase their sins by doing good?**

Direct kids to the bottom of their handouts. Say: **Write or draw how you would explain God's love and forgiveness to someone.** Allow time for kids to write or draw; then have kids form trios and share what they wrote.

Say: **Anyone can be forgiven. When Jesus died on the cross, he erased the sins of everyone who believes in him.**

## PILING ON THE SINS

Gather everyone in a circle. Choose one person to be the model.

Ask kids to name sins. For each one named, have the model put on one thing—for example, a glove, sweater, coat, or hat. Continue to have the model put on items until you run out of clothing or sins.

Challenge the model to do jumping jacks with all the clothes on. Have everyone say **"Anyone can be forgiven"** together. Each time your group says it, have the model take off one item

## YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **pile of clothes** (gloves, hats, sweaters, coats, scarves, and so on)

of the additional clothing. Ask the model to do a few more jumping jacks to show how much easier it is to move without the extra clothes.

Talk about: **How was the pile of heavy clothing like sin? How does it feel to take off the weight of sin?**

Say: **Sin can weigh us down, but Jesus forgives us when we ask him. *Anyone can be forgiven.***

## LIVE IT!

Talk about: **What would you do if someone did something really nasty to you? Would you be able to forgive that person? Let's watch a story about a girl who thought her brother did something unforgivable.**

Show "Spider Guts" (track 4) from the *Grow Together Now* DVD.

Afterward, lead this discussion: **Why was it hard for Holly to forgive her brother? Describe a time you had trouble forgiving someone.** Share an example from your own life first.

Talk about: **When Holly's brother knocked her teeth out, she learned that God forgave her for free, so she needed to show that forgiveness to her brother. Because Jesus came to earth and died on the cross, it's possible for all of us to receive that same forgiveness—for free! We need to make sure we're always willing to forgive others. *Anyone can be forgiven.***

## PRAYER

**Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to die for us, for forgiving us, and for listening to our prayers. In Jesus' name, amen.**

## TAKE-HOME PAGE

Give each child a Take-Home page. Encourage kids to select one of the six challenges for the week ahead.

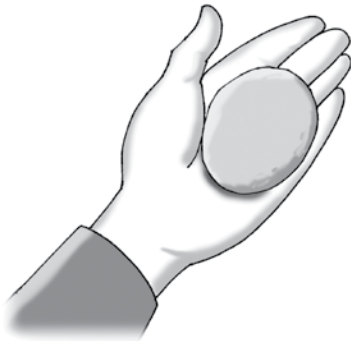


## YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ **Grow Together Now DVD**
- ✓ **DVD player**

# PRACTICING FORGIVENESS

Keep growing in your faith and character. Choose one of the following challenges to do this week to acknowledge God's forgiveness in your life.



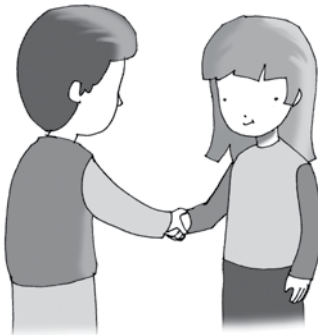
## CHALLENGE 1

Find some good skipping rocks, and go to a body of water with an adult. Skip the rocks across the water and pray for forgiveness for a sin as you do. For each time the rock skips, thank Jesus for his forgiveness.



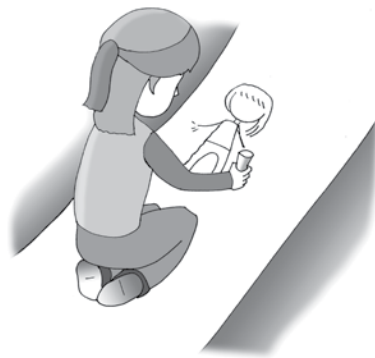
## CHALLENGE 4

Read Acts 9:1-19 with your mom or dad before bed. As you read about Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, think about the things you need to receive forgiveness for. Then ask Jesus to forgive you.



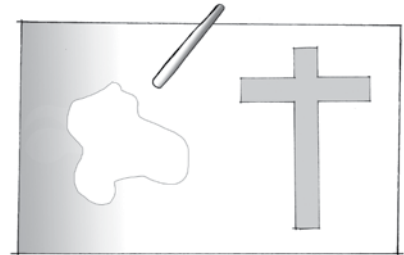
## CHALLENGE 2

Show forgiveness to others. When family members or friends do things that hurt you, forgive them instead of getting angry. Remember that Jesus made it possible for you to receive forgiveness. Be like Jesus!



## CHALLENGE 5

Using chalk, draw a picture of yourself on the sidewalk that shows how you feel when someone forgives you. Show your drawing to a family member, and tell him or her we receive forgiveness through Jesus.



## CHALLENGE 3

Mix food coloring in glue, and then use a craft stick to make the shape of a cross with the glue on wax paper. Let it dry, and then peel it off the wax paper. Give it to someone to hang in a window, and share with that person about Jesus' forgiveness.



## CHALLENGE 6

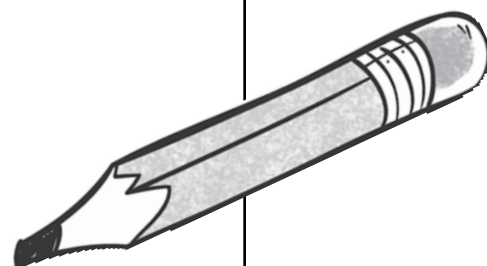
Create a play about Saul with your friends who know how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Invite your neighborhood friends to watch it. Share with them that we receive forgiveness through Jesus like Saul did.





# DEEDS WON'T DO

In this box, write a sin someone might commit.



Write some good deeds people might do to get forgiveness on top of the sin you wrote in the box.

“God’s love and forgiveness is like...”