

THE CHURCH'S WITNESS IN JUDEA, SAMARIA AND BEYOND
Philip's Witness and Saul's conversion
Acts 8–9

Memory Verse: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17 ESV).*

Background Helps:

Acts 8:1-25 marks a key transition point in the book of Acts as the gospel of Jesus Christ moves out from Jerusalem to Judea and especially to Samaria. See Chart #16 of your Bible Maps and Charts set. See Acts 1:8 and the suggested outline of the book of Acts in Forecast Week #14. The extension of the gospel to the Samaritans was of such consequence that the leading apostles, Peter and John, were sent to investigate and confirm this new development. The separate giving of the Holy Spirit in this case was a unique circumstance intended to demonstrate that the Samaritans also were now included in the body of Christ.

Lesson Helps:

Whenever the lesson covers several chapters from the Bible, you as the teacher have an opportunity to be selective in your lesson aim and content. Prayerfully make your decision based on your assessment of the needs of your class. For example, this week you could choose from among the following lesson aims and plans:

1. My students will learn about the evangelistic ministry of Philip, so that they will make definite efforts to witness to their friends this week. Consider briefly Philip's public evangelism in Acts 8:5-13. Then concentrate on his private witness to the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40. What lessons on personal evangelism do you learn from Philip's example? Reenact the story as a dramatic dialogue between two of your students. Also, in a role play, ask two of your students to dramatize a contemporary witnessing situation. (This will probably require some advance notice and preparation.) In your conclusion, have the students each write down the name of one person they will seek to evangelize this week. Then pray.
2. My students will learn about the conversion of Saul (Paul), so that they will be saved through a personal encounter with the living Lord. This lesson is obviously one geared for the unsaved. Saul's conversion is one of the key events in the New Testament, described three times in the book of Acts (chaps. 9, 22, and 26) and referred to repeatedly by Paul in his epistles (Gal. 1:11-24; Phil. 3:1-16; I Tim. 1:12-17.) Your outline for this lesson:
 - 1) Saul's life before meeting Jesus Christ (Acts 7:57; 8:1, 3; 9:1-2)
 - 2) Saul meets Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-19a)
 - 3) Saul's life after meeting Jesus Christ (Acts 9:19b-30)

Methods: This event lends itself well to the method of storytelling: Use descriptive, dramatic language; use dialogue between the characters; relate the story to your lesson aim; above all, do not merely report the story, but relive the story by dramatic use of both voice and body. Another method: Ask Christians in your class to give testimonies of their conversion. Also, tie the week's memory verse into the lesson.

In your conclusion, invite unbelievers to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ. Challenge Christians: Have you seen real changes in your life as a result of meeting Jesus Christ? (Note: We ought not to expect every conversion to be as dramatic an event as Saul's conversion, including an appearance of the risen Christ! Saul (Paul) was, after all, a unique individual—Christ's chosen apostle to the Gentiles.)

3. My students will learn several examples of following up new believers from the book of Acts, so that they will help new converts get started in the Christian life. How did the following people help new believers?

- Peter and John in Acts 8:14-25
- Ananias in Acts 9:10-19
- Barnabas in Acts 9:26-30

How can we follow up new believers today? Who is a new Christian you can begin to help this week?

Home Assignment:

 Read Acts 10–12.

 Memorize Acts 10:43.