

date: 7/30/17**Bible Passage: Acts 9**  
(Paul's Conversion)**God Is Love, Part 1****REMEMBER VERSE**

**I want to know Christ—yes, to know  
the power of his resurrection.**

**Philippians 3:10a**

**Inspire**

*Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

A few years ago, one of my oldest and dearest friends and her husband felt the Lord strongly encouraging them to adopt. After months of prayer, planning, and paperwork, they were on a plane overseas to meet their child.

When they arrived in the Kazakhstan orphanage, they met a handful of kids who needed homes. One child in particular caught their attention—a three-year-old girl named Darina. Cerebral palsy had inhibited her growth and development. She was still sleeping in a crib and hadn't taken her first steps or spoken a word. They asked God for direction and guidance for how they could best care for her. She desperately needed to experience unconditional love. My friends fell in love with this small girl and knew they were supposed to be her parents. For the first time in her life, Darina was showered with love from another human being. In no time she began to make significant progress, leaving the orphanage staff and doctors in complete shock. The three year old suddenly began to walk, to learn to identify colors and shapes, and to make sounds and attempt speech. The love being poured over her had begun to completely transform Darina.

It is now two years later and Darina is in the States with her mother and father. She is a different girl from the one my friends met the first day in the orphanage. The transformation took place when my friends followed God's leading. God chose to use the love of a mother and father and their willingness to serve a child.

Darina is a constant reminder of God's love and how it changes everything. God loved me so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for me, so my life might be forever changed. And like Darina, my life is different because of the work God has done in it. No longer am I alone; no longer am I weak. Because of His great love, I have a life full of hope and promise. Because of God's love, I am forever changed.

*Rae Lynn Lott*  
**ROCKHARBOR Church**



## Equip

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

In Acts 9, after Christ met Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul found himself blinded for three days. He spent these days fasting and in prayer, meditating on what he had seen and heard. This sort of consequence would have had major significance to a man like Paul. However, in a strange way, this was actually God's way of blessing Paul.

As we know, Paul was a Pharisee. Pharisees were the strictest, most-devout religious leaders. They rigidly followed several hundred laws. In fact, they even created “hedge” laws that protected them from ever stumbling into sin. Their legalism distanced them from the poor, the sick, and the lower classes. Ironically, blindness had huge social repercussions in the first century, especially to the Israelites. The Jews believed that most illnesses and deformities were the result of a sinful life. A Pharisee could not be blind; it would register him as unclean. Clearly, after this incident, Paul couldn't simply go back to his old life. His physical impediment would not allow him to. But it was his conversion to Christ, far more than his blindness, that kept him from returning to his former life. Therefore he was forced to wait, pray, and think about what had happened.

Ironically, rabbis called themselves “a guide to the blind.” There is no doubt that physical blindness would have drawn this to Paul's mind. God knew that Paul's heart had been hardened to His voice. Creating blindness in Paul created an opportunity for Paul to draw near to God once again.

Paul's entire identity was transformed. In everything that Paul did, he was an obedient servant of God. He went on to spread the good news to thousands of Gentiles. He encouraged them and helped their churches flourish. He was so transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit that it affected every facet of his life. God's love changed (and still changes) everything.

### Leader Tip

Although the same man is referred to in Scripture as both Paul and Saul, to reduce confusion and provide consistency in Wonder, unless it is a direct quote, he will be referred to as Paul.

## Support

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

As God's chosen ambassadors, we are called to live differently. Our lives represent God: who He is and what He is like. However, we simply *cannot* love others without being filled up by God first. It's impossible for us to love without limits unless we are doing it through the overflow that God gives us. We are destined to fail without His leading.

Each morning this week, take a moment to pause before God. Thank Him for your transformed life—give Him all the praise He deserves. Then, ask Him to be your fuel for the day, to fill you with His love so fully that it will overflow to each person around you. Ask how you can serve Him uniquely. Pray for Him to make you aware of situations or individuals who need to be infused with His love. Request that He lead you in each moment by His Holy Spirit.

Throughout the day, continually release your day to Him. Pray for these things again and again, until doing so becomes part of your natural rhythm.

## EXPLORE:: 10 min.

### Small Group Leaders

*Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.*

## Spreading Love

Children will be able to explore the concepts of mixing and how adding just a little bit of an agent can make a huge impact on the look of something, much like introducing someone to Christ's love can completely change a person.

### SUPPLIES (per small group)

- Resealable bags (3)
- Glue (white)
- Food coloring or liquid watercolors 

### PREPARE AHEAD

Put a small amount of glue in each of the resealable bags. In one bag, mix yellow food coloring with the glue. Mix blue in another bag, and red in a third.

### SET UP

Set the three bags on a table. Keep the blue food coloring out for the activity.

### RELATE

As children arrive, encourage them to sit with you and play with the colors. **What do you think would happen if I mix a few drops of blue food coloring in this yellow bag? Let's find out!** Put a drop or two into the yellow bag, zip it closed, and hand it to a child to gently mix. **So, what happened? Right! It turned green. If we add blue drops to this blue bag, will it turn green also?** Drop blue into the blue bag, zip it closed, and hand it to a child to mix. **What happened? Right! It looks exactly the same—it's still blue! Why isn't it different? Now ... let's try this last red one. I wonder what will happen if we added blue to the red? Let's find out!** Drop blue into the red bag, zip it closed, and hand it to a child to mix. **What happened? Yes—it turned purple! I wonder what it would look like if we kept adding blue? What happened when we added blue to the yellow and red? Did they stay the same? No, they changed! The only one that didn't change was the blue one. Did they change instantly? Right—it took time. You had to mix the new color in before you saw the change.**

## DISCOVER:: 25 min.

### Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

*Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.*

### Ponder Point

## God Is Love

## Chloe's Rules

**Host/Worship Leader**

### SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)
- Worship music (suggestions: "I Can Sing" and "Sincerely Yours," TruWorship *Sincerely Yours*)

Welcome children as they're entering the large group meeting area. *Tech: Cue Chloe's Rules video.* The theme song will play as the Worship Leader/Host enters and makes his way up front, welcoming and greeting children along the way. This should be a high-energy entrance. *Tech: Cue preschool program theme song.* Choose and play two upbeat worship songs of your choice from a worship album that complements the theme and focus of the lesson.

## Mail Time

**Host/Worship Leader**

### SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image \(see Resources\)](#)
- Envelope (large)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

### PREPARE AHEAD

Print or copy the Mail Time envelope art and attach to a large envelope. Print or copy one Remember Verse card and put it inside the envelope.

### RELATE

Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the "Seeker" close her eyes while the "Hider" finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out "hot" and "cold."

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with children.

Lead children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

### REMEMBER VERSE

**I want to know Christ—yes, to know  
the power of his resurrection.**

**Philippians 3:10a**

### REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

**Power:** strength or ability

**His resurrection:** when Jesus rose from the dead

## REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

**I want:** Both hands open, palms and fingers up, begin away from body and pull in.

**to know:** Index finger points to temples.

**Christ:** Index finger points up.

**yes:** Make fist with right hand and rock forward and back like knocking on door.

**to know:** Index finger points to temples.

**the power:** Make strong arms.

**of his resurrection:** Hold left palm facing up; with right hand's index and middle finger, touch middle of left palm.

## Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

### SUPPLIES

- What's/it: [Big Heart](#) (see optional image in Resources)
- Wardrobe of Wonder
- Small stools or chairs (2)

### What's/it: Big Heart

Hearts are a cultural representation of love. God lavishes His love on us, which leads us to want to live lives that serve Him in response.

### RELATE

Invite a child volunteer to “spy” on the What's/it by peeking into the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, *cue the Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What's/it in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What's/it. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What's/it from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

### ASK

(Volunteer's name), **why do you think the What's/it is a heart?** Allow volunteer to give you some suggestions. **Hearts represent love, right? Who are some people who show us love? Mommies? Daddies? Others in our families? What about God? I wonder whose love we're going to talk about today ... Maybe the What's/it has something to do with what we're going to hear today from The Big God Story! Friends, I think it's time to find out!**

# The Big God Story

Acts 9

God Is Love

Storytelling Technique: Motions

### SUPPLIES

- What's/it: [Big Heart](#) (see optional image in Resources)

**RELATE**

It's so great to be here today and talk together about God and His big story. You know, no matter how old you are, or how big or how small, there's always something new to learn about God. Let's pray and invite God's Spirit to teach us. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Today's part of God's story shows us how God's love changed everything for a man named Paul. We're going to be talking a lot about God's love, so every time I say the word "love," I want you to make a heart shape with your hands and put it over your chest (demonstrate action for children). Let's practice: God's love (do heart motion) is amazing! Great job! Let's begin our storytelling. Open Bible.

After Jesus returned to heaven, His disciples continued to serve God throughout the land. They healed people and told them about Jesus. Many people decided to trust in Jesus and follow Him. There were lots of people who were happy about the things the disciples were saying. Can you show me your happiest happy face? Interact with children. But there were also people who were *not* happy about the things the disciples were saying. Now can you show me your very unhappiest of unhappy faces? Interact with children.

There was one man who was very well known for being unhappy with the things the disciples were teaching about God. His name was Paul. He wanted to stop the disciples from talking about Jesus. Paul knew a lot about God and His laws, but He didn't know or understand God's love (do heart motion). Hey, that reminds me of what we found in the Wardrobe of Wonder today. What was it? Children will answer. A big heart! Show What'sIt from Wardrobe. Pass it around to children. God has the biggest heart because He loves (do heart motion) all of us so much, even people who go against Him. God *is* love, and He loved (do heart motion) Paul and wanted Paul to know Him and His love (do heart motion).

One day Paul, who was known as Saul at this time, was walking on the road with some of his friends. They were headed to a town called Damascus. Suddenly there was a flash of light from heaven all around Paul, and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice speak to him. "Saul! Saul!" the voice said. "Why are you fighting against me?" "Who are You, Lord?" Paul asked. "I am Jesus," the voice replied. "I am the one you are opposing and trying to stop. Now, get up and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do" (paraphrase of Acts 9:3–6).

The men traveling with Paul had heard the sound, but they didn't see anyone else on the road. When Paul got up from the ground, He opened his eyes—but he couldn't see anything. He was now blind! So his friends had to lead him by the hand into Damascus. For three days Paul was blind. He didn't eat or drink anything, but spent his time praying. While Paul was waiting, the Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to a man named Ananias, who lived in the same town. He told Ananias to go to the house where Paul was staying. Ananias obeyed. When he found Paul, he placed his hands on him. Ananias told Paul that Jesus had sent him with the message that he would be able to see again. Right away something like fish scales fell from Paul's eyes so he could see again. Paul decided to follow Jesus every day for the rest of his life. Paul had the happiest of happy faces!

God wanted Paul to know Him and His great love (do heart motion) for him. When Paul accepted God's love (do heart motion) and said yes to Jesus, everything in Paul's life changed. He was no longer unhappy with the things the disciples were teaching about Jesus. In fact, Paul began to teach people about Jesus too! He traveled all over, serving God and telling people that the promised Savior had come. It wasn't long until even his name changed—he had been known as Saul before this. He now lived each and every day serving God. Paul wanted everyone to know that God is love (do heart motion)!

## RESPOND:: 20 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.*

## Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

**SUPPLIES** (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages \(see Resources\)](#)
- Crayons

### RELATE

**In this part of The Big God Story, we heard about a man named Paul who wanted to stop the disciples from talking about Jesus. But God changed everything! His love changed Paul's life.**

**I wonder ... Whom does God love?**

**I wonder ... How does God show me His love?**

**I wonder ... How can I show God love?**

**I wonder ... How can I serve God?**

## BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

*Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.*

**SUPPLIES** (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)

### RELATE

Today, send your little ones out by allowing them to bless each other. Have your small group sit or stand in a circle. Say the following line to the child on your right. “(Child’s name), **God loves you so much.**” Then that child will say that phrase to the person on her right and so on until it comes back to you.

Now encourage children to place their hands out in front of themselves, palms up as if cupping them together to hold water. This is a posture that demonstrates our willingness to receive what God has for each of us. Then close with the following blessing:

**May God fill you with His love, and may you share His love with the people He brings into your lives. May you serve Him with this love each day of your life.**