

## NEW BELIEVERS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 2:36-47



*The message of the gospel is effective to save and change the sinful hearts of men.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**The Spirit is a gift for all generations** – Peter’s audience was undone by the message of the gospel. They asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Peter answered that they should repent of their sins. He told them that the promised Holy Spirit was for them too. Peter continued with a wonderful extension of the promise. The promise was for them, their children, and all who are far off. We fall into the category of all who are far off. What a blessing to read and know that we, too, can be transformed as these early believers were.

**The gospel reaps a harvest** – Jesus said that the disciples would do even greater things than He did because He was going to the Father (see John 14:12). When we read these words, our minds may first think about more incredible miracles. What Jesus meant, however, is that after He ascended, the Holy Spirit would work through the disciples to gather in the harvest. Jesus preached to the multitude, but never saw 3,000 converts! In fact, after all the miracles of Jesus, there were only about 120 believers who waited in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit. Peter preached the gospel, and 3,000 believed and were added in just one day!

**The gospel brings change** – The 3,000 converts were added to the initial 120 believers, and together they were the first local church. Immediately we see the fruit of the Spirit at work in their lives. They willingly shared what they had, regularly praised God, were devoted to the preached word by the apostles, and continued to add more and more people to their number.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

The behavior of the very first converts in the Book of Acts is the fruit of the gospel. These people were transformed from being mockers of Christ. In fact, some of them were probably in the crowd who yelled "Crucify Him!" And yet now, we see them selling their possessions to share with other Christians who had need. Peter, affected by this first dramatic gospel transformation, went on to exhort all new believers in his first letter to reject their sinful past and live holy, upright lives (see 1 Peter 1:14-15).

The gospel takes someone's worldly self-focus and turns their gaze heavenward. The first converts went from Jesus-haters to being people who loved Jesus. They served others and worshipped God through Christ. Only the Spirit of God can change hearts this way. The gospel continued to transform lives as more new converts were added each day.

### ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

**Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.**

**Bible Passage: Isaiah 35:5-8**

#### **Connecting the passage to Christ:**

Jesus certainly did open the eyes of the blind and restored hearing to the deaf. But there is a greater meaning to this passage than physical healing. Jesus opened our eyes and ears to understand the message of the gospel. The early church understood how their eyes and ears were opened. They were even called "the Way" (see Acts 9:2) because they followed the way Jesus spoke of when He said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). The way is the name given to the path of righteousness, which Isaiah says will be laid down for all those who repent. The early church understood this. Their eyes were opened and their ears unstopped to the truth of Christ.

#### **Questions for reflection:**

- What did Jesus mean when He said He is the way? (Jesus is the only way to salvation, the only way to the Father, and the only way to forgiveness.)
- Do we call ourselves the Way today? (No. The followers of Christ were called Christians starting in Acts 11:26. That became a clearer way to describe those who follow Christ. See also 1 Peter 4:16 and Acts 26:28. "The Way" is never used to describe Christians outside of the Book of Acts.)

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# SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

*Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.*

## ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

### GOD OPENS OUR EYES AND EARS THAT WE MIGHT HEAR, SEE, AND BELIEVE

#### Supplies:

- blindfold
- hearing protection (ear phone style)
- large poster board with the words "Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose again to new life so that if you believe and trust in Him you can be forgiven."

Use this illustration to show the activity of God behind the scenes to help us by opening up our ears and eyes to see and believe.

Ask for a volunteer to come forward. Place the blindfold on his eyes. Put hearing protection on his ears so that if you talk loudly he will be able to hear you, but he won't be able to hear a whisper.

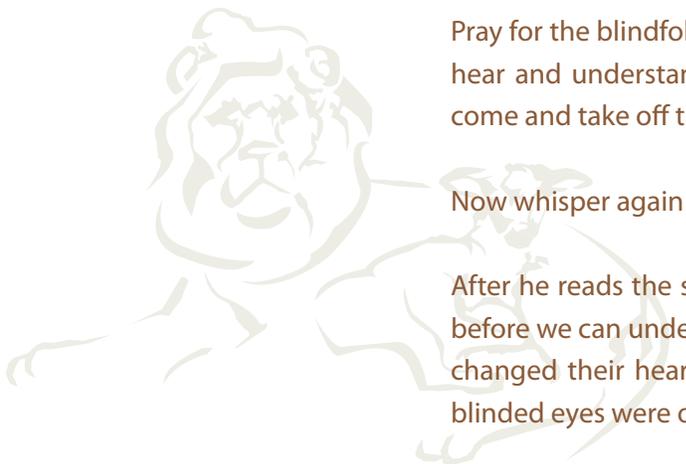
Tell your volunteer to do just what he hears. Whisper to him from across the room, "Read the sign and believe." Have another person, representing our sinful nature, say in a loud voice, "Say: No, I am going my own way."

Tell him in a whisper, "Repent. Go God's way. Please, just read the sign." Have the other person say in a loud voice, "Say: I don't need to read the sign I have plenty of time."

Pray for the blindfolded student and ask God to open his blinded eyes and let him hear and understand. Next have another person who is playing the Holy Spirit come and take off the blindfold and the ear protection.

Now whisper again and ask him to read the sign.

After he reads the sign, talk to the class about how God opens our eyes and ears before we can understand and believe. Talk about the new converts and how God changed their hearts. They went from crucifying Jesus to following Him. Their blinded eyes were opened by the power of God through the Gospel.



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### TRANSFORMED BY THE GOSPEL

**Supplies:**

- pretzels
- apple juice (enough for your class)
- cups
- napkins

Divide your class up into five teams. Give one team the apple juice. Give the second team the napkins and the pretzels. Give cups to two other teams. One team should be without anything. Read how the people were transformed by the Gospel and how they shared all that they had with one another. Ask the kids if they have everything they need for snack. Then ask the teams how they can share what they have been given in a way that will bless the whole class. Allow the class to share what they have so everyone has a snack.

Talk to the class about how this passage should affect our lives. We are not simply to indiscriminately give away all we have, but to actively look for those in need so we can share what we have. We have a tendency to give only when we are asked. It's better to look for opportunities.

Talk about how the power of the Gospel changed those who made up the early church.



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### THE EARLY CHURCH BACKWARDS

#### Supplies:

Two actors: Christian has a wallet with ten one dollar bills, a bag of apples, and two pens in his shirt pocket and Ed has two one dollar bills and an obviously used newspaper that he has already read.

This short skit is meant to demonstrate that we don't become Christians in order to get others to share with us. Perform the skit and then talk to the children about how Ed's behavior is different than that of the early church.

Christian: "Hey Ed, how are you doing? Have you thought about what I said?"

Ed: "Hi Christian. I've given it a lot of thought. I read the Bible – well, not all of it, but Peter's speech to the first believers really affected me. I didn't realize Jesus had so much to offer."

Christian: "Wow Ed, you are a Christian now?"

Ed: "Yup, I was affected by what I read. Those early Christians shared everything– that's amazing!"

Christian: "It is amazing Ed. Perhaps we could . . ." (Ed interrupts.)

Ed: "What do you have in the bag?" (Ed takes the bag from Christian, sees the apples, and takes one out and starts to eat it. Then he looks up at Christian.) "Thanks."

Christian: "Apples. . . . Sure you can have one. (Christian looks confused.)

Ed: "Hey, I need a pen." (He grabs one of Christian's pens.) "I'm going to fill out a job application downtown. Glad I ran into a Christian!"

Christian: "Say, Ed, I was going to say that it might be nice if you could come . . ." (Christian is again interrupted.)

Ed: "How much do you have on you?"

Christian: "How much what?"

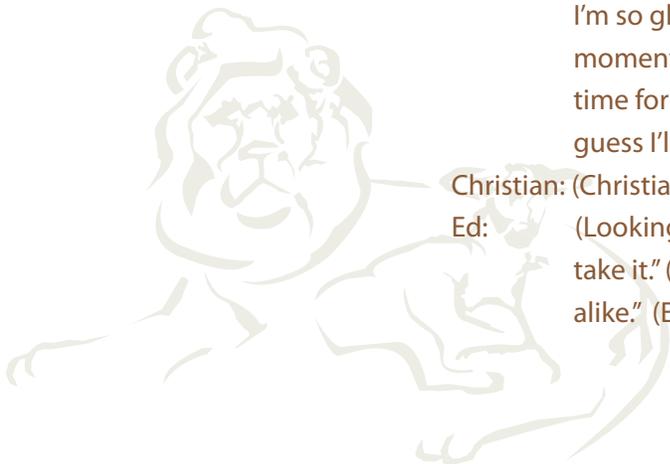
Ed: "Money, of course."

Christian: (He pulls out his wallet, takes out ten dollar bills and counts them.) "I have ten dollars. Why?"

Ed: "Here, let me see that." (He takes Christian's ten and brings out two of his own and counts and thinks out loud.) "Let me see, your ten plus my two is twelve. Divide twelve by two is six. Great! Here is your six back. I'm so glad I met you now. I forgot all about my application till just a moment ago. I didn't have a pen or enough cab fare and certainly no time for lunch. This Christianity stuff is going to work out just fine. I guess I'll see you later."

Christian: (Christian is a little stunned but answers) "See ya."

Ed: (Looking at his paper) "Oh, how silly of me. I already read this. Here you take it." (He gives the paper to Christian.) "You know, share and share alike." (Ed walks off stage.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

**Supplies:**

pencil and paper

Draw a picture of a group of Christians praising God in a house together.

### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### WHERE IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT?

Have the students look at the lives of the new believers in Acts 2:42-47 and describe which fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23 they see at work in the lives of these new Christians.

Draw them out and talk about what that tells us about these early believers. Jesus said that you will know true believers by their fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

Ask the class to consider if someone was looking closely at their lives, what kind of fruit they would see. Remind them we do not do good works to get to God. We do good works because God changed us. The person that finds his life void of good fruit should not simply try to produce good fruit. Rather, that person should repent of bad fruit and place himself upon the mercy of the cross and ask God to transform his heart. Once that is accomplished, he will want to do good works.

### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Repent** – Repent means to turn around, to change course. Literally, it means that you recognize the way you are going and change for the better. It is as though we do not fully realize that the way we are going is toward the wrath of God. But once we do see it, we reverse course. It is the Holy Spirit who shows us that sin leads to destruction and gives us the grace to repent, turn around, and walk toward Jesus and everlasting life.