

## WEEK 1 LESSON GUIDE

WHAT'S  
NEXT?

### **BIG IDEA**

We can follow Jesus.

### **BIBLE**

**Saul on the Road to Damascus:**  
Acts 9:1–20; 1 Corinthians 15:1–9

## **ABOUT THIS WEEK**

When you put a puzzle together, starting at the corners and slowly following the edges as a guide is a good idea. This week, we'll hear about how Saul became a follower of Jesus after his unique experience on the way to Damascus. Saul shows us that **we can follow Jesus** even when we don't see the big picture right away.

## **LARGE GROUP TIME**

Hello, all you inquisitive, brilliant, maze-navigating, challenge-seekers! Looking for a good puzzle to solve? Here's one: Now that Jesus had gone up to heaven, what's next for the people who knew and believed in him? What about the people who did not know him yet? Today, we'll examine the story of a man named Saul who actively went against Jesus followers until he met Jesus in a most unexpected way! Let's jump in and find out together ... *What's next?*

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### **ACTIVITY | Maze Challenge**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need to design a simple maze on the floor with painter's tape. Select one volunteer to wear a blindfold and choose another person to be their audio guide. The blindfolded person has to follow the path by listening to verbal instructions from their guide.*
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** *Have kids stand in a single file line either holding a rope or placing their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Have the first person in the line take them all through the maze. Have them take turns being the leader.*
- **What puzzling challenge do you think awaits us today?** Riddle me this:
  - Be all ears and listen up!
  - To find your way, you can't use your eyes.
  - Be careful but quick with each step.
  - Your friend's voice is your only guide.
- It looks like we're doing something where we're blindfolded, and we need to follow someone's voice to guide us through a maze!
- This reminds me of how the person in today's Bible story couldn't see for a little while, either. Let's see how you do following someone's voice.

**ACTIVITY | Puzzle Piece Relay**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need pieces of construction paper cut into pieces like a puzzle, with one puzzle for each team. Divide your kids into teams and give each team member at least one piece of the puzzle. On "go," team members work as quickly as possible to put their pieces together. The first fully constructed puzzle wins! For more action, set up a start and finish line with all the pieces at the start. Have each team member take a piece of the puzzle and run to place their piece down at the finish line. Once all the pieces are there, team members then race to put the puzzle together.
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Make a simple obstacle course and place puzzle pieces of a simple board puzzle at the start and the board at the end. Have kids take turns taking one puzzle piece through the obstacle course and inserting into the board before tagging in the next person.
- Until you had all the pieces, it must have been difficult to know what the finished picture would look like.
- In today's Bible story, we'll find out that Jesus had big plans for a man named Saul, and he revealed them to him piece by piece.

**POLL | Maze-Like Choices**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this poll, have kids indicate their answers to each question by moving to opposite sides of the room, then discuss with each other why they chose as they did. Regroup back into the middle for the next question.
- **Which kind of maze would you prefer to go through?**
  - Cave or desert? Why?
  - Mountain or jungle? Why?
  - Shopping mall or theme park? Why?
  - Underwater or outer space? Why?
- I'm sure we have all felt like we were in maze-like situations before, where we felt lost or confused.
- In today's Bible story, Saul was just going about his day as he normally did when suddenly, everything changed in a maze-like way.

**SO WHAT?** Why does it matter to God and to us?

**SCRIPTURE | Acts 9:1–20 (Saul on the Road to Damascus)**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you tell the Bible story each week this month, you'll need a mystery box with a large question mark drawn or pasted on it. Keep a Bible inside the box until it is time to read from it.
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Convert any up-front demonstration into a sensory activity that kids can participate in through touch. You may also want to prepare a few sensory bins for kids to play with quietly if they get overwhelmed.
- We have been having lots of fun, but what's next, you ask? **No, really—ask me, "What's next?"**
  - Let's see if there are any clues inside this mystery box!
  - It's the Bible! Sometimes, The Bible feels like a book filled with riddles and puzzles, but God can help us understand!
  - Take today's Bible story, for example. As we read it together, let's think of it like a puzzle being put together.
- **Let's read Acts 9:1–5.**
  - Saul is described as someone who threatened Jesus' followers and put them in prison, so you might be *puzzled* about why God picked him to help change the world for good. But God can see all the puzzle pieces at once.
  - While Saul was on the way to arrest more followers of Jesus, he was blinded by a great light and

heard from Jesus directly. That's when he realized that Jesus was speaking to him.

- **Let's see what's next in Acts 9:6–16.**
  - While Saul was still in Damascus, unable to see, God spoke to a follower of Jesus named Ananias and told him to go pray for Saul.
  - Ananias had heard about Saul and was *puzzled* by God's directions. Saul wanted to kill Jesus' followers! Ananias didn't trust Saul and didn't want to go, but he trusted God.
- **What's next? Let's find out in Acts 9:17–20.**
  - Ananias followed God's instructions and prayed for Saul. Then, Saul could see again! After meeting Jesus on the road and being prayed for by Ananias, Saul became a follower of Jesus himself. He went on to spread the good news about Jesus to all sorts of places, to anyone who would listen.
  - Isn't that a-*maze*-ing? All the puzzle pieces came together when the people in the story followed Jesus. God was able to take someone who was an enemy of Jesus' followers and turn him into a big Jesus follower himself!
- Seeing God do something like this, the members of the Early Church must have been like, "Wow! Now I wonder what's next!"

### BIG IDEA | We can follow Jesus.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a foam board cut into four pieces using a craft knife—you can shape the edges like jigsaw puzzle pieces or make straight edges. Write one word of the Big Idea on each piece and hide them around the room. Invite kids to find the pieces and put them together in the center of the room.*
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Upload the Big Idea graphic provided in your resource folder to an online jigsaw puzzle maker ([like this](#)) and have preteens take turns matching the pieces. If you have multiple devices, have them compete in teams! Continue this for the whole series.*
- **Now that we learned from Saul's story, what's next?** It's time for the Big Idea! Let's piece it together.
- **We can follow Jesus.**

### VIDEO | A Clip Of "Pino The Maze Master"

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Show [this video](#) of a pup mastering a homemade maze. We always suggest viewing the clip beforehand to make sure you think it's a video that will be a good fit for your context! For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)*
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** *Show [this video](#) of a squirrel learning a maze instead.*
- If you've ever seen videos of animals mastering a maze, it's so impressive ... and entertaining. It's a-*maze*-ing how they can figure out where to go to reach their goal. But what you don't see in these videos is that each of those animals had to be trained to beat the maze.
- That's kind of like what Jesus does for us when we follow him. Each day is kind of like a maze, with twists and turns we sometimes don't expect.
  - **What should we do when we get into an argument with a friend?**
  - **Where can we go when we feel sad and alone?**
  - **Who can we trust to help us with something difficult?**
- Whatever the situation, Jesus is the best guide to help us know what's next. **We can follow Jesus.**

### ACTIVITY | Story Puzzles

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you will need blank [puzzle kits](#) or five-inch by eight-inch index cards. Have kids draw a picture of what they remember from today's Bible story on their puzzle grid. Afterward, have kids break (or cut) their picture into puzzle pieces, swap with a friend, and try putting someone else's puzzle together.*

- What a fun way to remember today's Bible story. When you look at just one or two pieces of the puzzle, you might not be able to tell what the picture is, but once all the pieces are put together, it's easier to see what the picture is about.
- It was like Saul was handed some puzzle pieces when Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus, and he couldn't see them at all. He could only follow the clues he was given. That led him to Ananias, who got his own puzzle pieces from God. Jesus told Ananias to pray for Saul and that must have been super confusing. But when the pieces were brought together, Saul was able to see what Jesus had in mind for him, and so did Ananias.
- When Jesus calls us to follow, he doesn't just leave us in the dark. He shows us the way and even points us to people who can help us along the way. That's why **we can follow Jesus**.

### SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 15:1–9

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read the passage together.*
- This book is a letter to the members of the church in Corinth. **Do you know who wrote this letter?** It was Saul, who is better known as the apostle Paul.
- **If you hadn't heard the story of Saul today, would you have believed that the author of this letter used to chase down Jesus' followers and have them arrested?** Probably not, right? Clearly, the apostle Paul loves Jesus a lot.
- Saul's story is fascinating. He admits here that he "*persecuted the church of God*" in the past, but from the moment Jesus appeared to him, he focused on sharing the good news of Jesus with everyone, everywhere. He reminded the Early Church members, "*By this gospel, you are saved.*"
- It's an incredible reminder that if someone like Saul could believe and follow Jesus, God has the power to help anyone believe and follow.
- **We can follow Jesus.**

### VIDEO | *What's Next?*, Episode 1

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Play this week's episode of [Grow TV](#).*

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

### REFLECTION | Puzzle Station

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need a bin filled with small [brain teaser toys](#), maze workbooks, or easy jigsaw puzzles for kids to complete as they think about the prompts below.*
- **We can follow Jesus**, but sometimes our minds are like a maze that leads us away from doing what Jesus wants us to do. But when we take a moment to pray and reflect on what God is saying to us, God helps us understand and see the way more clearly.
  - **Why do you think Saul made the decision to follow Jesus?**
  - **What does following Jesus look like for you?**
  - **Can we get better at following Jesus? How?**
  - **Who are the people who help you follow Jesus? How do they help you?**

### RESPONSE | Making Our Way

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need index cards and pencils. Have kids write or draw their responses on their index cards, then fold them in half the long way. Place everyone's cards on the floor like obstacles, from one end of the room to the other. Invite kids to start at one end of the room, walk around each of these cards, and make their way to the other side.*

- **What is something (or someone) that could get in the way of following Jesus?**
  - Maybe you have family members who actively don't want you to follow Jesus.
  - Maybe your close friends don't follow Jesus, so you feel alone.
  - Maybe you just don't know enough about Jesus, so it's hard to follow him.
- **Let's walk around this path filled with obstacles together.** Whatever might be making it more challenging for you to follow Jesus, know that he will help you find a way. As you walk around these obstacles, Jesus walks beside you and guides you through every step.
- **We can follow Jesus.**

## MEMORY VERSE | Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!
- **"In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."**

## PRAYER

- Jesus, you made it possible for anyone to know, love, and follow you. Help us through anything that stands in the way of us doing that. We want to follow you no matter what's next! Amen.

## SMALL GROUP TIME

### DISCUSSION

- **SCRIPTURE QUESTIONS**
  - **Where was Saul heading when he heard from Jesus?** *He was headed to a place called Damascus so that he could arrest more followers of Jesus.*
  - **What did Jesus ask Saul? How do you think Saul felt when he heard that question?** *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Possible answers: Saul probably felt afraid. He might have thought Jesus would punish him for what he was doing. Maybe he didn't know if the voice was real.)*
  - **How did Ananias feel when God first told him to go to Saul? Why did Ananias go anyway?** *Ananias was afraid because he had heard about all that Saul had done. He went because he trusted God and wanted to follow Jesus.*
  - **Read 1 Corinthians 15:9. Why did Saul (Paul) think he was the "least of the apostles?"** *Because he persecuted the church of God.*
- **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**
  - **What is one way you can follow Jesus this week?**
  - **What might make it hard for you to follow Jesus?**
  - **Who is someone who can help you follow Jesus?**

### ACTIVITY | Make Your Own Maze

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need graph paper, pencils, erasers, and colored pencils. Have kids create their own mazes on graph paper [like these](#). You can have kids swap and solve each other's mazes if there is time.
  - ✂ **PRETEEN HACK:** Amp up the theme for preteens by putting out puzzles and mazes to complete each week or over the course of the month during any down time. Any puzzles that you have on hand would work great, or get some of these: [The Clearly Impossible Puzzle](#), [Labyrinth Maze](#), 3D puzzles like [these](#), maze balls or maze cubes like [this](#).
  - ✂ **ACCESSIBILITY HACK:** Give each kid a cube gift box and five (or less) printed mazes of your

choice, each cut to the size of one side of the box. Help kids write the Big Idea on the top of the box, then glue one maze to each remaining side. They can complete some of the mazes and also invite others, like family members or friends, to do the mazes as a way to share what they learned about this week.

- A maze is not a straight line from start to finish. There are random turns and dead ends where you can get stuck. But that doesn't mean the answer isn't there, right?
- Following Jesus can be filled with challenges, too. But **we can follow Jesus** anyway, knowing that he leads the way and always helps us down the right path.