

dwell®



Let's PLAY!

Play is the preschool level of the *Dwell* curriculum. Based on 36 stories from Genesis through Acts, Play leads you and the four- and five-year-olds in your group on a joyful discovery of God's love.

All you need is the Play resource kit, a set of colorful take-home story cards for each child, a few common craft supplies, and a space to meet! You'll love the way Play encourages preschoolers to respond with faith to the God who loves and cares for them.

The Play resource kit includes

- 36 session plans with clear, easy-to-follow lesson outlines, materials lists, and teaching tips.
- one sample set of 36 take-home story cards.
- full-color leader's resources to use in your sessions.
- reproducible pages with patterns, pictures, and story figures.
- a *Sing With Me Preschool Songs* CD with 22 kid-friendly songs.

As part of the *Dwell* curriculum, Play includes

- wondering questions, which invite learners to dwell in God's story as they consider the people in the story, the choices they made, and how God was at work in their lives.
- Re★formed tips, indicating that every story is taught from a Reformed, God-centered perspective, which views the

Bible primarily as the story about God and his love for us—not simply biblical heroes or morals.

- multiple intelligence tips that can help you tune your lessons to the various ways children learn.
- access to the *Dwell at Home* family of resources designed to support faith formation at home.

You also have the option to subscribe to *Dwell Digital*, which gives your teachers access to all leader materials on any device at any time. For more information, see DwellCurriculum.org.

Here are the 36 stories included in Play:

Old Testament Stories

1. God Made the World
2. God Made People
3. Adam and Eve Disobey
4. Noah Obeys God
5. Abraham and Sarah Obey God
6. God Takes Care of Joseph
7. Joseph Helps His Brothers
8. Moses: From Basket to Palace
9. Moses: Exodus
10. Moses: Manna in the Desert
11. Joshua and the Tall Wall
12. Hannah's Prayer
13. Samuel Listens
14. David and Goliath
15. Elisha and the Widow's Oil
16. Elisha and Naaman
17. Jonah and the Giant Fish
18. Daniel and the Lions

New Testament Stories

19. Jesus Is Born
20. A Visit from the Magi
21. Anna Waits
22. Jesus Calls His Disciples
23. Jesus Heals a Little Boy
24. Jesus Heals a Man Who Couldn't Walk
25. Jesus Calms the Storm
26. Jesus Feeds a Big Crowd
27. Jesus Heals Ten Sick Men
28. Jesus Heals a Man Who Couldn't See
29. Jesus and the Children
30. Zacchaeus
31. Palm Sunday
32. Easter
33. Jesus Changes Paul
34. Paul and the Wall
35. Escape!
36. Shipwreck

Play—Up Close

The Play program supplies leaders with a step-by-step guide for each session. This key will help you understand what is included in each session.

It all starts with the Bible! The Scripture reference is listed first because it's the foundation of every *Dwell* session

Wondering isn't just for kids! These wondering questions will help you to experience the story as you prepare to lead.

The session focus. This section helps you identify the key teaching or theme of the session.

Goals for growing in faith and action. Each session's Faith Nurture Goals help you focus on what the children will be learning and how you can respond together to God's story.

34 Paul and the Wall

Scripture
Acts 9:20-25

Focus
Jesus took care of Paul when he was in trouble.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Tell how Jesus took care of Paul.
- Feel assured that Jesus always takes care of us.
- Thank Jesus for his love and care.

Reflection

Paul's conversion involves a call to do a specific task for the Lord. Jesus tells him to go into the city "and you will be told what you must do" (9:6). Ananias confirms that call by telling Paul that he will become an ambassador of the gospel.

Paul takes up his work for the Lord almost immediately. Within a few days we find him in the synagogue preaching and arguing that "Jesus is the Son of God" and convincing many people that this is true (9:20-24).

You may wonder how Paul is able to do this so quickly without being coached by the other apostles. Remember that as a persecutor Paul had probably been studying the stories about Jesus and the teachings of the early church in order to fight them. He also probably knew all the arguments the Christians presented in their case that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now not only can he make the same arguments, but he can speak from personal experience as someone who has seen the living Christ. Undoubtedly what he had to say made a small band of full impact on the people in the synagogue, and it must have encouraged the small band of Christians in Damascus to hear their persecutor preach.

You may stumble over the phrase "proving that Jesus is the Messiah" (9:22). Jesus doesn't we accept Jesus as our Savior by faith, not by arguments? Didn't Jesus encourage believing over seeing? That's true; however, the text says that the Jews in Damascus were puzzled by Paul's preaching and arguing, but it doesn't say that any of them became Christians because of it. It only made them want to kill them.

Paul's fellow Jews in Damascus arrange for people to stay by the city gates to catch Paul and kill him. Word also gets out that the governor of Damascus has ordered Paul's arrest. Paul's enemies probably hoped to catch Paul in the process of running away and conveniently get rid of him. If anything, Paul is too brave. The other disciples urge him to run. One night they put Paul in a big basket and lower him by ropes through a window in the city wall. From there he makes his way to Jerusalem.

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul tries to join the Christian community there. Understandably they are afraid of him and wonder whether he has really become a disciple. Barnabas, who always seems to be bringing people together whenever he appears, introduces Paul to the apostles and tells them what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus.

With the apostles' blessing, Paul continues to preach "boldly in the name of the Lord." Some of his fellow Jews consider his preaching to be such a threat that again they try to kill him. In the end Paul has to leave and, escorted by some fellow believers, he sets off through Caesarea to go back to his hometown of Tarsus.



General Supplies
Each session of Play includes specific materials you'll need for teaching, such as visuals filed under the leader's resources tab, printable pages, or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you'll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies, such as drawing paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, safety scissors, glue sticks, and play dough. You'll also need a CD player or MP3 player and the CD that comes with this curriculum.

Wondering
• How did Paul's training and personality help prepare him for his abrupt change from a persecutor to a preacher?
• How did he feel going over the wall in that big basket?
• Look up Barnabas in a concordance to trace his reconciling activities in Acts.

Teaching
• It would be easy to overly romanticize this story of Paul's escape with your preschoolers, who love superheroes. Keep your focus on Paul's eagerness to tell others about Jesus—and on Jesus' love for Paul and the amazing way Jesus enabled Paul to become a messenger of the gospel.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activity	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Step 1	10-15	Welcome Basket talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Basket collection, beanbag (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Story picture from session 33 (leader's resources)	SA Aa
Step 2	10	Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Story picture (leader's resources)	SA Aa
Step 3	10-15	Story drama	<input type="checkbox"/> Props: basket, masking tape or sidewalk chalk	FA Aa
Step 4	5-10	Praise	<input type="checkbox"/> Song: "God Is Watching over You" <input type="checkbox"/> Song: "Just Say Thanks" <input type="checkbox"/> Show and Share cards, session 34	FA Aa

Step 1

Welcome the children and gather everyone around you in your usual circle. Bring with you an assortment of baskets (all sizes) to show the children. Place your collection inside a big laundry basket and set it in the center of your circle. Invite each child to come and choose a basket from your collection to take back to his or her place in the circle. (Keep the laundry basket for yourself.) Give everyone a chance to show the others their basket and suggest what it might be used for. Talk about things we might collect or carry or store in baskets—crayons or markers, silverware, plants, flowers, toys, fruit, candy, sewing things, picnic supplies, and so forth.

Conclude your conversation by talking about the laundry basket and what it might hold—clothes, toys, a pet, maybe even a person! Give the children a chance to climb into the laundry basket to see if it's big enough to hold them! Then collect their baskets in your laundry basket and promise to tell the group a story about someone, a grownup someone, who found a very good use for a big basket like yours.

Step 2

Take a few minutes to recall Paul's story from last time. Show the group the two-sided story picture you used to illustrate Paul's big change from Jesus' enemy into Jesus' friend. Can the children retell the story to their friends who were absent last time? Wonder aloud what

Leaders love this section! The Reflection provides additional context, background, and insights to help you, the leader, grow in your own faith and understanding of Scripture and to share the story's key ideas with your group. This section is not part of the actual lesson but serves as a bonus—just for you.



Kids learn best through a variety of methods! These symbols show how each step of the session is designed to appeal to kids' unique gifts.

happened to Paul after that big change. What did Paul do and where did he go? Tell the group you have one story clue for them—it's the big basket you brought to class today!

If your church building is made of brick, with tall walls, consider taking a quilt outside, finding a place beside a wall, and settling on it for the story. (Take with you your Bible and the Paul picture for this session.) When the story describes the walls around Damascus, take time to look up at the wall of your church and wonder if there was any way Paul could escape over such a tall wall!

Show the children where today's story is found in your Bible and say your original story call together:

This is the Bible, let's open it wide. (hands together, palms up, like a book)
Listen to God's story that's told inside! (hands behind ears, listening)

Then read the story using the visual provided in your leader's resources. Follow the story with a few questions that will invite the children to wonder and reflect on Paul's amazing escape:

- I wonder if Paul was surprised that some people wanted to put him in jail.
- I wonder if Paul was frightened.
- I wonder if Paul knew that Jesus was more powerful than Paul's enemies.
- I wonder what Paul said when his friends told him to get in the basket.
- I wonder what it felt like to go down, down, down that wall and land outside the city.
- I wonder what Paul prayed to Jesus that night.
- I wonder if there was anything Paul loved more than telling others about Jesus.

Tip
Don't be discouraged if your little ones are unable to remember all of Paul's story from last time. Many of them won't have heard of Paul before in their short lives. Thankfully, preschoolers love repetition, so use this advantage each week to recall and to build on the stories of Paul in a way that makes him memorable!

Reformed
Declaring that Jesus is Lord can be a dangerous occupation, even today. His lordship isn't just over things spiritual, but all things, and all our lives.

Tip
This is another action-packed story about Paul! You'll want to act it out with your little ones as you did last time. You'll need your laundry basket, along with a roll of masking tape—that's it for props today.

Step 3

Retell Paul's story by acting it out together. Spend a few minutes deciding with the children which person they'd like to be (remember, it's OK if they all want to be Paul!). Also decide where you'll place your city wall, and use masking tape (or sidewalk chalk if you took your story outdoors today) to mark off the city boundaries. Then retell the story in your own words and help the children bring it to life by acting it out. Retell it as many times as you need to in order for each little "Paul" to make his or her escape in the laundry basket.

Step 4

Spend some time praising Jesus for his love—and for taking care of you wherever you go, just as he took care of Paul. Invite the children to mention some of the places they've been in the week since you were together last. Did they find themselves in any scary places or situations? Invite their stories, then assure them that Jesus was there with them, watching over them just as he watched over Paul. Emphasize that Jesus cares for his friends and is always with them!

Sing "God Is Watching over You" (CD track 11) and "Just Say Thanks" (CD track 20). If time remains, repeat this simple prayer with the children to close your session:

Each session has four steps to learning and growing:
Step 1: Gathering and introducing the Bible story
Step 2: Presenting the Bible story
Step 3: Reviewing the Bible story
Step 4: Concluding with worship and praise to our great God

Easy Extras

Storytelling Options SA Aa

Time: 10 minutes

Materials

Guest storyteller or *God Loves Me*, book 49 (Over the Wall *The Story of Paul's Escape in a Basket*)

If you invited a guest storyteller to come last time, invite him back. You might want to lead conversion before he tells them about today's encounter with his enemies and his escape over the city wall.

Or if you have access to the *God Loves Me* storybooks about Paul (available from Faith Alive), use book 49 to tell the story of Paul's escape in a basket. Read through the book, giving everyone plenty of time to look at the pictures as you read. Then give the book to one of the children to "read" to the group again.

2. Game: Everywhere! FA Aa

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials

six paper dinner plates, "places" pictures (printable page 40), beanbag

To emphasize Jesus' promise to always be with us, as he was with Paul, places onto separate paper dinner plates. Prepare the game by gluing the pictures of familiar cluster the plates picture side up on the floor in the middle of your circle.

Take turns tossing the beanbag, trying to land it on one of the pictures. The successful "pitcher" can pick up his or her plate, show it to the group, and invite everyone to shout "Jesus is with us at [place pictured]". Thank you Jesus!

Faith Modeling
Don't forget to share with the children about a place you found yourself this week when you needed to remember that Jesus was there too—right beside you, caring for you.

Tip
To save time, cut out the Paul basket figures before your session. If you saved your story pictures from the last session, save today's pictures too. After the final story about Paul (session 36), help the children put their story pictures in the correct order and lace them together to make a book.

Helpful teaching tips! Each session includes tips that will help you tailor the lesson to the particular needs of your group. Reformed tip boxes give further insight into the Scripture passage and its interpretation from a Reformed/Presbyterian perspective.

Extra activities. At the end of each session plan you'll find some extra activities that can be substituted for a regular step or added to the plan to extend your session.

Your Play kit will include a variety of resources to help you lead each Play session. Here are the companion materials for this lesson.

The *Sing with Me Preschool Songs CD* is included in every Play kit. It includes 22 kid-friendly songs that you can use throughout your session.



Easy-to-use printable pages provide fun activities that encourage children to create while they learn.

Colorful leader resources help you tell the story in a way that engages kids.



Beautiful children's resources called "Show and Share cards" are sent home with children after each session, giving them a way to share God's story with their families.



www.DwellCurriculum.org

What sets *Dwell* apart?

Dwell offers a coordinated approach to church education from preschool through grade 8. But *Dwell* is more than a curriculum—it's a program that seeks to provide kids with less noise and more time to experience God's story. *Dwell* actively engages kids in God's story with interactive games, reflective wondering, dramatic storytelling, and a whole lot of fun. Through it all, *Dwell* invites kids to find their place in God's story, living into and out of it for the rest of their lives. For more information about *Dwell* curriculum's goals and values, as well as its scope and sequence, visit DwellCurriculum.org.

Does theology really matter in a curriculum?

Just because a children's curriculum contains Bible stories doesn't mean it is designed to teach kids all they need to know. Every session of Play is taught from a Reformed, God-centered perspective. It's a perspective that views the Bible primarily as the story about God and his love for us—not about biblical heroes or morals. This perspective considers every story as part of the one big story of God's redemption and restoration of this fallen world through Jesus Christ. The Re★formed tip box is your assurance that we take seriously what your little ones will be learning; it explains *Dwell's* approach in every story you'll be teaching.

How does Play help me partner with parents?

Corresponding Show and Share cards can be sent home with the children as a way to share God's story with their families. We've also provided a reproducible letter you can send to families to introduce them to Play and share your hopes for the year.

You can recommend that parents and caregivers purchase Play's *Sing with Me Preschool Songs* CD from FaithAliveResources.org, and sing those songs with their little ones at home. Check out our *Dwell at Home* family connection resources on the Leader Support page of DwellCurriculum.org for other ways to connect your teaching to faith formation at home.

Order today!

You can place an order at DwellCurriculum.org by clicking on "Shop" or by calling 800-333-8300.

Questions?

Contact us with any questions at 800-333-8300 or support@dwellcurriculum.org.

13

Samuel Listens

Scripture

1 Samuel 3:1-18

Focus

God talked to Samuel; Samuel listened.

Faith Nurture Goals

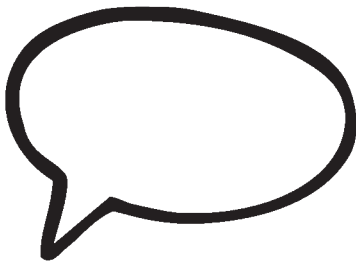
- Tell what Samuel said when God talked to him.
- Understand how God talks to us today.
- Thank God for loving us and talking to us.

Reflection

Samuel was a man “for such a time as this.” The situation he found himself in was grim. Chapter 2 reports the deplorable spiritual and moral conditions that infected the family of Eli, the priest at Shiloh. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were so corrupt that they stole from the sacrifices that people gave to God. And, as if that weren’t enough, they slept with the women who served at the “tent of meeting” (the tabernacle—God’s holy dwelling place). And all the while, Eli, who was becoming physically blind, also turned a blind eye toward his sons’ behavior. Chapter 3 begins with the dire report that “in those days the word of the LORD was rare.”

Was God silent? Had God turned his back on Israel? No, the problem was that the people did not offer a listening heart—except for one young boy.

Samuel had gone to bed “where the ark of God was”—the most sacred place. His job was evidently to guard “the lamp of God” (probably the candlestick that was part of the tabernacle furnishings) and keep it from going out. “Then the LORD called Samuel” (v. 4). Was it a voice, a movement, a sound? We don’t know. But it was enough that Samuel dutifully got up to see if old Eli had summoned him, saying, “Here I am; you called me.” But no, Eli had not called.



The writer explains the problem. It was not that Samuel was obtuse or reticent. Rather, “Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him” (v. 7).

Three times this happened, and finally even Eli, the old priest who had let Israel sink so far spiritually, got the message. This time he instructed Samuel to respond, “Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.”

And then things got very close and personal. The Lord didn’t just speak to Samuel. Rather, “The LORD came and stood there”—an even more baffling and mysterious appearance. Samuel replied as Eli had told him: “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

This is often as far as the story goes, especially for young children, for the message Samuel heard from the Lord that night hardly seems suitable for young ears. It was a message of unmitigated judgment against Eli and his family. But the Lord revealed it to young Samuel, who, in his long life, would be the bearer of many difficult messages to Israel, as well as words of blessing.

Of course, when morning came, Samuel was afraid to meet Eli. He didn’t want to convey a terrible message to a man he had grown to care about. But Eli knew the word of the Lord had come to Samuel. It’s touching and ironic that this man whose sons were renegades called young Samuel “my son.”

“What was it he said to you?” asked Eli. He threatened Samuel with God’s judgment if he withheld anything. Samuel told him everything. It’s as though Eli knew what was coming. His words are chilling and powerful: “He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.”

In Samuel, God called a “listener” he could trust—“and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground.” Every word the Lord gave Samuel concerning Eli came true.

General Supplies
 Each session of *Play* includes specific materials you’ll need for teaching it, such as visuals filed under the leader’s resources tab, printable pages, or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you’ll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies, such as drawing paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, safety scissors, glue sticks, and play dough. You’ll also need a CD player or MP3 player and the CD that comes with this curriculum.

Wondering

- What did Samuel hear? A voice? A sense of inner calling?
- Was Eli in any way responsible for his sons’ behavior?
- How do you listen for God’s voice?

Teaching

- Some people might think that little ones can’t really listen to and respond to God yet. But in teaching this story about Samuel, we’re laying the foundation for their understanding that God does speak to us through his Word—and God wants us to listen.
- Every time leaders show their group where God’s story is found in the Bible, they’re reinforcing the fact that it’s GOD’S story, God’s words to us. Adding a verbal reminder that God is happy when we listen to him is helpful too.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activity	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Step 1	10-15	Listening Game Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> Story booklet from session 12	Aa
Step 2	10	Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Samuel/Eli puppet (leader’s resources)	Aa
Step 3	10-15	Story play Songs	<input type="checkbox"/> Towels or carpet squares <input type="checkbox"/> Song: “Be Still and Know” <input type="checkbox"/> Song: “God Made Me” <input type="checkbox"/> Song: “Head, Shoulders, Knees, Toes”	Aa
Step 4	5-10	Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible <input type="checkbox"/> Children’s books <input type="checkbox"/> Show and Share cards, session 13	Aa

Step 1

Gather your arriving children around you and tell them that today’s story from the Bible is about good listening. Ask everyone how their ears are doing today. What sounds did they hear this morning—at home, on the way to church, inside the building? Invite them to play a

Tip
 Here’s a quicker way to introduce the listening theme: tuck your cell phone in your purse or hide it somewhere in your room. Arrange for a friend to call you during your opening time with the children—and challenge them to find your ringing phone. Compliment the group on their good listening.

listening game with you to make sure everyone’s ears are in good working order. Then play track 22 (“Listening Game”) from your CD and enjoy identifying the sounds together. Compliment the kids on their good ears and their great listening.

Remind everyone that God listens too—God listens to us! Show the group the story booklet from the last session (“A Baby for Hannah”) to jog their memories. Look at the illustrations together, encouraging the children to supply the story. Compliment the group on how well they listened to Hannah’s story last week. Emphasize the way God listened to Hannah’s prayer for a son. Tell everyone again that God listens to us too.

Repeat the prayer (and the motions) that you introduced last time:

Loving God, to you we say: (*fold hands*)

We're glad you hear us when we pray. (*bow head*)

We love you, Lord. We need your care (*hands over heart*)

every day—and everywhere. (*hold hands out wide*)

Amen.

Step 2

If you've been sitting for a while, stand up with the children and play a quick round of "Simon Says" to get the wiggles out. Ask everyone to listen carefully—and to do what Simon says. Use your last command to settle the group around you ("Simon says find a good place on the floor for listening to God's story!"). Tell everyone that the story for today is about a child—like them—who listened to God.

Show the children where today's story is found in your Bible and say your usual story call together:

This is the Bible, let's open it wide. (*hands together, palms up, like a book*)

Listen to God's story that's told inside! (*hands behind ears, listening*)

Tell the children that today's story is about Hannah's baby, Samuel, but in this story he's an older boy. Use the two-sided puppet to tell Samuel's story to the group.

Baby Samuel grew and grew and grew, until he was a fine boy. (**Show Samuel.**) When he was old enough, his mother, Hannah, brought Samuel back to the temple to live with old Eli, the priest. (**Show Eli.**) Samuel's job was to help Eli with the work around the temple.

One night, Samuel said goodnight to Eli and lay down to sleep. (**Lay Samuel down to sleep.**) But just as he fell asleep, there came a voice. "Samuel, Samuel!" said the voice in the dark. Samuel sat up in bed (**demonstrate**). Who was that voice? And why was it calling to him? Maybe it's Eli, thought Samuel.

Samuel jumped up and ran to old Eli. (**Show Eli.**) He looked at Eli and said, "I'm here! Did you call me?"

But Eli shook his head (**demonstrate**) and said, "I didn't call you, Samuel. Go back to bed, my little friend."

(**Settle Samuel down again.**) But Samuel heard the voice again: "Samuel! Samuel!"

You can guess what Samuel did—that's right! He went to find Eli again. (**Show Eli.**) And again Eli said, "I didn't call you, Samuel. Go back to bed."

(**Settle Samuel down again.**) Samuel went back to sleep again. But, again, there was that voice: "Samuel! Samuel!" And again, Samuel ran to find Eli (**demonstrate**).

(**Show Eli.**) This time Eli said, "I didn't call you, my son. But I think I know whose voice you heard calling. It was God, Samuel. Go lie down—and when you hear the voice again, say, "Speak, Lord! I'm listening to you.""

Tip

Before class, put together the Samuel/Eli puppet (leader's resources) and tuck it into your Bible at 1 Samuel 3.

Re★formed

Again in this story we realize that it is always God who takes the initiative to move his plan for salvation along. In Samuel's time, and today, God calls and equips people to listen to his voice and become his spokespersons in the world.

(**Settle Samuel down again.**) “Samuel! Samuel!” God’s voice called again. And this time Samuel didn’t run to find Eli. He just sat up in bed (**demonstrate**) and said, “Speak, Lord. I’m listening to you!”

God was happy with Samuel’s answer. God talked to Samuel that night, because God had important things to tell him. And Samuel listened!

Step 3

Spend some time playing your way into the story of Samuel with the children. Tell them you’ll pretend to be Eli. Then give each one a towel (or carpet square) for a “bed.” Ask everyone to pretend to be Samuel by finding a place to spread their towels, and “falling asleep” somewhere in your room. Turn out the lights and play “Be Still and Know” (track 6) from your CD as the children “sleep.” After they’ve quieted, pause the song and say in a loud voice, “Samuel! Samuel!” Ask the children to run to you and repeat Samuel’s response. Have them lie down, then repeat the process. Repeat it one more time, this time telling them to go back to bed, listen for the voice, and say, “Speak, Lord. I’m listening to you!”

After you’re done, pile up your “beds” in the center of your room and dance and sing to the children’s favorite songs. (Be sure to include “God Made Me” and “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” CD tracks 4 and 1.) Remind the children again that they are God’s children. God loves and cares for them just as God loved and cared for Samuel, and God loves it when we listen to his words in the Bible.

Step 4

Spend your closing minutes talking about how we listen to God today—even though we don’t usually hear God’s voice in the night, as Samuel did. Pass around a Bible for the children to hold. Remind them that all the words we read in the Bible are God’s words to us, and all of the stories are stories God wants us to hear. Listening to God’s stories is like listening to God.

Pass around some other storybooks the children enjoy too. Then ask the kids to stack the books in the center of your circle, saving the Bible for last and placing it on top of the pile.

Close with a brief prayer, thanking God for loving each child in the group (mention them by name) and for talking to us in the Bible. Ask God to help all of you be especially good listeners this week. Send the children home with their Show and Share cards.

Faith Modeling

Bring your own Bible along today. Show the children where you’ve marked verses that are important to you, and tell them how you listen to God by making the Bible and its message an important part of your daily life.

Easy Extras

1. Listening Game Aa 🐾

This activity can be substituted for step 1.

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: none needed

Here’s another listening game you might choose to play with the children as you introduce today’s lesson about Samuel. Gather the kids in a circle around you and sit on the floor. Invite a volunteer who thinks he is a very good listener to sit in the center of the circle, close his eyes tight, and put his head down so he can’t see. Quietly invite another volunteer to say to your listener in the center, “Good morning, [name]!” The child in the center can then

open his eyes and identify the one who said, “Good morning!” (Play until each child has had a turn to be a listener.)

2. Story Pictures

Time: 10 minutes 🕒

Materials: construction paper, felt, Samuel cutouts (printable page 14), glue sticks, markers

If the children in your group enjoy making story pictures to take home, provide half-sheets of construction paper, 3" x 5" (8 x 13 cm) pieces of felt, cutouts of Samuel (printable page 14), washable markers, and glue sticks. Write the caption “Samuel! Samuel!” on the lower edge of each background and help the children color their Samuel cutouts. As the children color Samuel, glue the left and right edges of a felt piece to each child’s background, leaving the top side open so children can tuck Samuel into “bed.” To simplify the process, glue the felt on ahead of time or use tape instead of glue so that children don’t have to wait for the glue to dry. Help the kids tuck Samuel under his covers—and remove him as he responds to God’s voice. Encourage the kids to use their pictures to tell Samuel’s story to their families.

3. Listening to God’s World 🕒 🌍 🏠

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: blanket

If you happen to teach this session on a warm, sunshiny day, take a blanket outdoors and spend a few minutes enjoying the beauties of God’s world (another way God speaks to us). Spread a blanket, gather on it, and close your eyes. Use your ears to listen to the sounds all around you. See how many sounds the children can identify. On your way back, use your eyes to find as many of God’s created wonders as you can. When you get back to your room, make a list of all the things you saw and listened to.

4. Prayer List 🕒 🙏 Aa

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: posterboard or large sheet of paper, markers, tape

If you began a prayer list poster last week, revisit it today. Pray for the needs you’ve pictured—and add more as the children suggest them.



FOLD HERE





34

Paul and the Wall

Scripture

Acts 9:20-25

Focus

Jesus took care of Paul when he was in trouble.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Tell how Jesus took care of Paul.
- Feel assured that Jesus always takes care of us.
- Thank Jesus for his love and care.

Reflection

Paul's conversion involves a call to do a specific task for the Lord. Jesus tells him to go into the city "and you will be told what you must do" (9:6). Ananias confirms that call by telling Paul that he will become an ambassador of the gospel.

Paul takes up his work for the Lord almost immediately. Within a few days we find him in the synagogue preaching and arguing that "Jesus is the Son of God" and convincing many people that this is true (9:20-22).

You may wonder how Paul is able to do this so quickly without being coached by the other apostles. Remember that as a persecutor Paul had probably been studying the stories about Jesus and the teachings of the early church in order to fight them. He also probably knew all the arguments the Christians presented in their case that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now not only can he make the same arguments, but he can speak from personal experience as someone who has seen the living Christ. Undoubtedly what he had to say made a powerful impact on the people in the synagogue, and it must have encouraged the small band of Christians in Damascus to hear their persecutor preach.

You may stumble over the phrase "proving that Jesus is the Messiah" (9:22).

Don't we accept Jesus as our Savior by faith, not by arguments? Didn't Jesus encourage believing over seeing? That's true; however, the text says that the Jews in Damascus were puzzled by Paul's preaching and arguing, but it doesn't say that any of them became Christians because of it. It only made them want to kill them.



Paul's fellow Jews in Damascus arrange for people to stay by the city gates to catch Paul and kill him. Word also gets out that the governor of Damascus has ordered Paul's arrest. Paul's enemies probably hoped to catch Paul in the process of running away and conveniently get rid of him. If anything, Paul is too brave. The other disciples urge him to run. One night they put Paul in a big basket and lower him by ropes through a window in the city wall. From there he makes his way to Jerusalem.

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul tries to join the Christian community there. Understandably they are afraid of him and wonder whether he has really become a disciple. Barnabas, who always seems to be bringing people together whenever he appears, introduces Paul to the apostles and tells them what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus.

With the apostles' blessing, Paul continues to preach "boldly in the name of the Lord." Some of his fellow Jews consider his preaching to be such a threat that again they try to kill him. In the end Paul has to leave and, escorted by some fellow believers, he sets off through Caesarea to go back to his hometown of Tarsus.

General Supplies

Each session of *Play* includes specific materials you'll need for teaching it, such as visuals filed under the leader's resources tab, printable pages, or props to use for telling the story. In addition, you'll want to keep a stash of the usual teaching supplies, such as drawing paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, safety scissors, glue sticks, and play dough. You'll also need a CD player or MP3 player and the CD that comes with this curriculum.






Wondering

- How did Paul's training and personality help prepare him for his abrupt change from a persecutor to a preacher?
- How did he feel going over the wall in that big basket?
- Look up Barnabas in a concordance to trace his reconciling activities in Acts.

Teaching

- It would be easy to overly romanticize this story of Paul's escape with your preschoolers, who love superheroes. Keep your focus on Paul's eagerness to tell others about Jesus—and on Jesus' love for Paul and the amazing way Jesus enabled Paul to become a messenger of the gospel.

Session at a Glance

Steps	Time	Activity	Session-Specific Materials	Multiple Intelligences
Step 1	10-15	Welcome Basket talk	<input type="checkbox"/> Basket collection, beanbag (optional) <input type="checkbox"/> Story picture from session 33 (leader's resources)	 Aa
Step 2	10	Story	<input type="checkbox"/> Story picture (leader's resources)	 Aa
Step 3	10-15	Story drama	<input type="checkbox"/> Props: basket, masking tape or sidewalk chalk	 Aa
Step 4	5-10	Praise	<input type="checkbox"/> Song: "God Is Watching over You" <input type="checkbox"/> Song: "Just Say Thanks" <input type="checkbox"/> Show and Share cards, session 34	 Aa 

Step 1

Welcome the children and gather everyone around you in your usual circle. Bring with you an assortment of baskets (all sizes) to show the children. Place your collection inside a big laundry basket and set it in the center of your circle. Invite each child to come and choose a basket from your collection to take back to his or her place in the circle. (Keep the laundry basket for yourself.) Give everyone a chance to show the others their basket and suggest what it might be used for. Talk about things we might collect or carry or store in baskets—crayons or markers, silverware, plants, flowers, toys, fruit, candy, sewing things, picnic supplies, and so forth.

Tip

If the children need a break from sitting before listening to the Bible story, use your basket to play a quick game of beanbag toss. Place the biggest basket in the center of your circle, ask the children to step back a few feet, and take turns trying to toss the beanbag into the basket. Keep track of how many beanbags make it into the basket.

Conclude your conversation by talking about the laundry basket and what it might hold—clothes, toys, a pet, maybe even a person? Give the children a chance to climb into the laundry basket to see if it's big enough to hold them! Then collect their baskets in your laundry basket and promise to tell the group a story about someone, a grownup someone, who found a very good use for a big basket like yours.

Step 2

Take a few minutes to recall Paul's story from last time. Show the group the two-sided story picture you used to illustrate Paul's big change from Jesus' enemy into Jesus' friend. Can the children retell the story to their friends who were absent last time? Wonder aloud what

happened to Paul after that big change. What did Paul do and where did he go? Tell the group you have one story clue for them—it's the big basket you brought to class today!

If your church building is made of brick, with tall walls, consider taking a quilt outside, finding a place beside a wall, and settling on it for the story. (Take with you your Bible and the Paul picture for this session.) When the story describes the walls around Damascus, take time to look up at the wall of your church and wonder if there was any way Paul could escape over such a tall wall!

Show the children where today's story is found in your Bible and say your original story call together:

This is the Bible, let's open it wide. (*hands together, palms up, like a book*)

Listen to God's story that's told inside! (*hands behind ears, listening*)

Then read the story using the visual provided in your leader's resources. Follow the story with a few questions that will invite the children to wonder and reflect on Paul's amazing escape:

- **I wonder if Paul was surprised that some people wanted to put him in jail.**
- **I wonder if Paul was frightened.**
- **I wonder if Paul knew that Jesus was more powerful than Paul's enemies.**
- **I wonder what Paul said when his friends told him to get in the basket.**
- **I wonder what it felt like to go down, down, down that wall and land outside the city.**
- **I wonder what Paul prayed to Jesus than night.**
- **I wonder if there was anything Paul loved more than telling others about Jesus.**

Tip

Don't be discouraged if your little ones are unable to remember all of Paul's story from last time. Many of them won't have heard of Paul before in their short lifetimes.

Thankfully, preschoolers love repetition, so use this advantage each week to recall and to build on the stories of Paul in a way that makes him memorable!

Re★formed

Declaring that Jesus is Lord can be a dangerous occupation, even today. His lordship isn't just over things spiritual, but all things, and all our lives.

Step 3

Retell Paul's story by acting it out together. Spend a few minutes deciding with the children which person they'd like to be (remember, it's OK if they all want to be Paul!). Also decide where you'll place your city wall, and use masking tape (or sidewalk chalk if you took your story outdoors today) to mark off the city boundaries. Then retell the story in your own words and help the children bring it to life by acting it out. Retell it as many times as you need to in order for each little "Paul" to make his or her escape in the laundry basket.

Tip

This is another action-packed story about Paul! You'll want to act it out with your little ones as you did last time. You'll need your laundry basket, along with a roll of masking tape—that's it for props today.

Step 4

Spend some time praising Jesus for his love—and for taking care of you wherever you go, just as he took care of Paul. Invite the children to mention some of the places they've been in the week since you were together last. Did they find themselves in any scary places or situations? Invite their stories, then assure them that Jesus was there with them, watching over them just as he watched over Paul. Emphasize that Jesus cares for his friends and is always with them!

Sing "God Is Watching over You" (CD track 11) and "Just Say Thanks" (CD track 20). If time remains, repeat this simple prayer with the children to close your session:

Dear Jesus,
Thank you for your loving care.
You are with me everywhere!
I'm glad that you will always stay
right beside me, night and day.
Amen.

Faith Modeling

Don't forget to share with the children about a place you found yourself this week when you needed to remember that Jesus was there too—right beside you, caring for you.

Send the children home with their Show and Share cards. Encourage the children to tell Paul's story to their families—and promise them another exciting story about Paul the next time you meet.

Easy Extras

1. Storytelling Options Aa

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: guest storyteller or *God Loves Me*, book 49 (Over the Wall *The Story of Paul's Escape in a Basket*)

If you invited a guest storyteller to come last time, invite him back. You might want to lead in to today's story by asking "Paul" the storyteller to recall with the children the story of his conversion before he tells them about today's encounter with his enemies and his escape over the city wall.

Or if you have access to the *God Loves Me* storybooks about Paul (available from Faith Alive), use book 49 to tell the story of Paul's escape in a basket. Read through the book, giving everyone plenty of time to look at the pictures as you read. Then give the book to one of the children to "read" to the group again.

2. Game: Everywhere!

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials: six paper dinner plates, "places" pictures (printable page 40), beanbag

To emphasize Jesus' promise to always be with us, as he was with Paul, play "Everywhere!" Prepare the game by gluing the pictures of familiar places onto separate paper dinner plates. Ask the children to help you cluster the plates picture side up on the floor in the middle of your circle. Take turns tossing the beanbag, trying to land it on one of the pictures. The successful "pitcher" can pick up his or her plate, show it to the group, and invite everyone to shout "Jesus is with us at [place pictured]. Thank you Jesus!"

Tip

To save time, cut out the Paul/basket figures before your session. If you saved your story pictures from the last session, save today's pictures too. After the final story about Paul (session 36), help the children put their story pictures in the correct order and lace them together to make a book.

3. Story Pictures Aa

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: black and brown construction paper, cut into half sheets; Paul cutouts (printable page 41); markers; chalk; yarn pieces (10" or 25 cm long); tape; glue sticks; star stickers

If you made story pictures with the children last time, you might want to make another one today that shows Paul's escape in a basket. Give everyone a Paul/basket cutout and give the children time to color them. As they work, give each child a black background to which you've added a brown "wall" on the lower half. Help the children attach their Paul cutouts to a piece of yarn and secure it (through a hole at the top of the wall) on the back side with tape. Add stars to the night sky—and a caption (JESUS LOVES PAUL). Your completed Paul pictures should look something like this:





Paul and the Wall

Paul loved Jesus so much that he couldn't stop talking about him. He talked to people on the road and to people in the marketplace. He talked to people he knew and to people he didn't know. Wherever Paul went and whatever Paul did, he talked about his friend Jesus.

Many people were happy to learn about Jesus. But there were some people who did not like to hear Paul talk about Jesus. They were angry with Paul. "Go away, Paul. We don't want to hear about Jesus. We don't need Jesus."

Jesus' enemies wanted Paul to stop talking about Jesus, but, of course, Paul didn't obey them. "No!" said

Paul. "Everyone everywhere needs to hear about Jesus' love. I'll never stop."

So Jesus' enemies made a wicked plan. "We must kill Paul," they said. "That's the only way we'll get him to stop telling people about Jesus. Let's catch him when he tries to leave this city. We won't let him go through the city gates."

So Paul's enemies hid beside the city gates and watched for him. They waited and watched. They watched and waited. Sooner or later Paul would have to walk right through those gates—and they would grab him.



Paul's friends heard about the evil plan to catch Paul. They ran to tell him. "Look, they're waiting and watching for you!" When Paul looked out of the window, he saw that his friends were right. "What can we do? Who can save you?" Paul's friends wondered.

Of course! Jesus could save Paul! Jesus helped Paul's friends make a terrific plan to escape his enemies. While most of the people in the city were sleeping, Paul's friends found a very big basket and some very strong ropes. "Come on, Paul," they whispered. And

they took Paul and the basket to the top of the city wall, far from the gate where Paul's enemies watched and waited. "Climb in, Paul!" they whispered. Then they tied a rope to the basket, and slowly, carefully, they let Paul down over the wall until the basket bumped the ground at the bottom.

Paul was safe! He climbed out of the basket, waved goodbye to his friends, and ran away from the city as fast as he could go.

