**Topic: Identity**

**Bible Passage: Acts 9 1-22; 2 Corinthians 5:17**

**Activity: Straight Line, Squiggly Line**

*Supplies: pens/markers, sheet of paper for each preteen*

Give each preteen a blank sheet of paper and a pen or marker. Have them pass the paper to the person on their right. Instruct that person to draw a straight line anywhere on the page. The line can be any size and point in any direction. Pass the paper back to the original owner.

Instruct preteens to now pass the paper to the person on their left. Instruct that person to draw a squiggly line anywhere on the page. The squiggly line can be any size, shape, or direction. Pass the paper back to the original owner.

Give each preteen 3-5 minutes to make a “new creation” using the lines drawn on their page. After preteens have finished, judge the drawings and choose a winner for “Most Creative” or “Best Drawing.”

**After the activity, say:** You made some great “art!” You were given a straight line and a squiggly line, but you managed to create something beautiful out of it. Your drawing was a “new creation!”

Do you remember Paul from the Bible? He was a great missionary of the Gospel and he wrote several books of the Bible. But Paul was not always Paul.

Paul used to be Saul. Saul had a life-changing experience one day that also changed his name. Open your Bibles to Acts 9.

Acts 9 tells us the story of Saul. Saul did not believe in Jesus. In fact, Saul was so opposed to Jesus that he persecuted those that did believe in Him. He made it his mission to arrest and punish those that preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On one occasion, Saul had permission to go and hunt down Christians in the city of Damascus. This is where Saul’s life would change.

On the way to Damascus, something happened. Look at Acts 9:3-4

*Read Acts 9:3-4*

Saul was knocked off his horse by this bright light. We don’t know how bright it was, but it must have been pretty impressive to startle the horse and send Saul tumbling to the ground. Saul was probably terrified but he decided to ask whom it was that was speaking to him. Look with me at Acts 9:5-6.

*Read Acts 9:5-6*

It was Jesus! Jesus was the light that had knocked Saul off his horse and stopped him from going to Damascus. Then, Jesus gave him specific instructions on what to do next. You see, Jesus had a different plan for Saul. Instead of persecuting Christians, Jesus was calling Saul to follow Him and lead others to Christ.

The whole incident left him blind for three days. God sent a man named Ananias to confirm the calling the Jesus had given Saul—to preach to Gospel to others. After Ananias spoke to Saul, he could see again.

This experience was definitely life changing for Saul. The Bible says that Saul believed in Christ and was baptized. Afterward, he decided to change his name to Paul so that everyone would know about his change of heart. Saul was an enemy of God, but now Paul was a follower of Christ. He was a new person and a new creation.

Listen to these words that Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

Paul understood that an encounter with Jesus changes everything. When we begin a relationship with Him, he makes something new. He has the power to transform us into a new creation.

Being a new creation means that God gives us a new purpose.

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus said, “Come, **follow me**,” Jesus said, “and I will make you **fishers** **of** **men**.” The men that met Jesus that day had a life-changing experience. Each of them dropped everything and began to follow Jesus so that they could teach others about Him.

After we begin a relationship with Jesus, he gives us a new identity, purpose and mission. His mission is for us to share Him with others.

After Paul met Jesus, he became the most determined follower of Christ. He shared Jesus with people all round the world! He was beaten, put in prison, even almost murdered—but he continued to share the Gospel just like Jesus had called him to do. Jesus gave him a new identity and a new purpose. Paul spent the rest of his life trying to fulfill the purpose that Jesus had given him.

There are many ways that you can share Jesus with others. You can serve at church. You can share your testimony with friends at school. You can create opportunities to serve others in your community just to show them that Jesus loves them too.

Let’s pray and then head to small groups to discuss some ways that we can fulfill this new purpose that God has given us.

*Pray and dismiss preteens to small groups.*

**Small Group Discussion**

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions:

* Why do you think Saul changed his name to Paul? Why couldn’t he keep the same name?
* How did Paul’s life change after He met Jesus?
* What do you think Paul meant when he said those in Christ were a “new creation?”
* What are some ways that you can point others to Jesus?
* In Acts 22 and 29, Paul shares this story with other people so that they would believe in Jesus. Have you ever shared you faith story with someone? If not, what would make it easier for you to do so?
* What tools has Jesus given us to help us with our new purpose/mission?

**Small Group Activity: The Change**

*Supplies: food coloring, test tubes with caps (*[*http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/product/test-tubes*](http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/product/test-tubes)*)*

Give each preteen a test tube filled with water. Discuss some ways that preteens can share Jesus with friends of family. As you discuss, pass the food coloring around to each preteen. Instruct them to place 3 to 4 drops into the test tube and watch the color change that occurs. Explain that this change is a reminder for the change that occurs when we meet Jesus Christ. He transforms us into a new creation and gives us an important new purpose!