

Turned Around: A 5 -Day Adult VBS Curriculum

First Baptist Church of Romulus, MI

Theme Overview: "Turned Around" explores the messy, beautiful reality of answering God's call. Through the lives of five biblical figures, we will see how God takes our reluctance, our brokenness, our shame, and our past, and uses them to propel us into His divine purpose.

Day 1: Jonah — The Reluctant Turnaround

Scripture: Jonah 1-3 (NLT)

The Pivot: From running in the opposite direction to reluctantly delivering God's message.

Teaching Notes:

- **The Runaway Prophet:** Read Jonah 1:13. *"The Lord gave this message to Jonah... 'Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh... But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord.'"* Jonah isn't just hesitant; he actively rebels. Tarshish was in the exact opposite direction of Nineveh.
- **You Can't Outrun God:** The storm (Jonah 1:4) and the great fish (Jonah 1:17) are severe mercies. They stop Jonah from ruining his own life and calling. God will sometimes intervene drastically to get our attention.
- **Imperfect Obedience:** Read Jonah 3:15. Jonah finally obeys, but his message is incredibly brief and lacks any mention of God's love. Yet, God uses this imperfect obedience to enact massive change—the entire city repents.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever felt God calling you to do something you actively wanted to avoid (a "Nineveh")? How did you respond?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Encourage transparency. People might share about avoiding a difficult conversation, resisting a call to volunteer, or ignoring a prompt to give. Emphasize that resisting God usually stems from prioritizing our comfort over His will.
2. Why do you think God chose to use Jonah, even knowing Jonah's heart wasn't fully in it?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* This highlights God's sovereignty. God doesn't need our perfection to accomplish His plans. Using a flawed vessel like Jonah proves that the power of salvation belongs to God, not the messenger.
3. How does Jonah's imperfect obedience encourage or challenge you in your own faith journey? What does it teach us about God's power versus our own limitations?

- *Suggested Response/Direction:* It should offer immense grace. We often feel we have to have our hearts and attitudes perfectly aligned before we can serve God. Jonah shows us that simply taking the physical step of obedience —even with a bad attitude —allows God to work miracles.

Day 2: Mary Magdalene — Delivered to Declare

Scripture: Luke 8:1-3, John 20:11-18 (NLT)

The Pivot: From spiritual bondage (freed from seven demons) to becoming the first evangelist of the Resurrection.

Teaching Notes:

- **A Dark Past:** Luke 8:2 mentions Mary Magdalene as a woman *"from whom he had cast out seven demons."* She knew profound spiritual bondage, isolation, and likely social ostracization.
- **Deep Devotion:** Because she had been forgiven and healed of so much, her devotion was fierce. She followed Jesus, supported his ministry, and stayed at the cross when others fled.
- **The First to Know:** Read John 20:14-16. *"She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus... 'Mary!' Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, 'Rabboni!' (which is Hebrew for 'Teacher')."* Jesus entrusts the most important news in human history to a woman society would have previously marginalized.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does understanding Mary's dark past (demon possession) amplify the power of her position at the empty tomb?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* It shows the ultimate "turnaround." The person who was once under the control of the darkest demonic forces is chosen to be the very first herald of Christ's victory over darkness and death.
2. Why do you think Jesus chose Mary Magdalene to be the very first witness to the resurrection, rather than one of the twelve disciples?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Jesus constantly upended social norms. In that culture, a woman's testimony wasn't even valid in court. By choosing Mary, Jesus validates her immense devotion (she stayed at the tomb while the men hid) and shows that in His Kingdom, grace and devotion supersede societal status.
3. In what ways can our deepest wounds or past struggles be transformed by Christ into our most powerful testimony?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* People relate to brokenness much more than they relate to perfection. When we share how Christ delivered us from addiction, depression, or past mistakes, it offers tangible, relatable hope to others suffering from the exact same things.

Day 3: Peter — From Failure to Foundation

Scripture: Matthew 26:69-75, John 21:15-19 (NLT)

The Pivot: From denying Christ three times in fear to being reaffirmed as a foundational leader of the Church.

Teaching Notes:

- **The Bitter Denial:** Read Matthew 26:74-75. *"Peter swore, 'A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!' And immediately the rooster crowed... And he went away, weeping bitterly."* Peter's failure wasn't a minor slip; it was a public, adamant denial of his closest friend and Savior in His darkest hour.
- **The Anatomy of Restoration:** Read John 21:15-17. Jesus doesn't ignore the failure, but He meets Peter with breakfast, not condemnation. Jesus asks "Do you love me?" three times—matching the three denials—giving Peter a chance to declare his devotion.
- **Recommissioned:** Jesus' response to Peter's love isn't just forgiveness; it's a job: "Feed my sheep." Jesus entrusts the care of His followers to a man who had profoundly failed Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced a failure of faith that left you feeling disqualified from serving God, much like Peter must have felt?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Guide the class to reflect on how guilt and shame make us want to hide from God (like Adam and Eve). The enemy uses our failures to convince us our calling is revoked.
2. Notice that Jesus addresses Peter by his old name, "Simon, son of John," during the restoration. Why do you think He does this?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Jesus is taking him back to the beginning. Before Jesus named him Peter ("The Rock"), he was just Simon the fisherman. Jesus is resetting their relationship, reminding Peter that His love isn't based on Peter's performance as "The Rock," but on his foundational identity.
3. What does Peter's restoration teach us about how Jesus handles our failures? How does He move us from guilt to purpose?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Note that Jesus provided physical care first (breakfast), addressed the spiritual issue gracefully but directly, and then immediately gave him a job. There was no "probation period" for Peter. Grace restores us to immediate usefulness.

Day 4: The Samaritan Woman at the Well — Shame to Sharing

Scripture: John 4:4-30 (NLT)

The Pivot: From an isolated outcast avoiding people at the well to a joyful witness who

evangelized her entire town.

Teaching Notes:

- **The Outcast:** Read John 4:6-7. She comes to the well at noon (the hottest part of the day) likely to avoid the other women who drew water in the morning. She is carrying deep shame regarding her five past husbands and current living situation.
- **The Encounter:** Read John 4:13-14. Jesus crosses social, gender, and ethnic boundaries to speak with her. He doesn't shy away from her sin (v. 16-18), but He offers her "living water" rather than judgment.
- **The Immediate Impact:** Read John 4:28-29. *"The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?'"* Her shame is gone. She leaves behind the very thing she came for (the water jar) because she found a new, urgent purpose.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was it so culturally shocking that Jesus was speaking to this specific woman? What boundaries did He cross?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Jesus crossed three major boundaries: Ethnic (Jews hated Samaritans), Gender (Rabbis did not speak to women alone in public), and Moral (He was holy; she was a known social outcast/sinner). It shows God's love refuses to be boxed in by societal rules.
2. How did Jesus balance addressing her sin with offering her grace?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* He didn't pretend her sin didn't exist; He brought it up truthfully. But He didn't use it to condemn her or shame her. He used the truth of her brokenness to show her exactly why she needed the "living water" He was offering.
3. She told her village, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!" Why wasn't she ashamed to say this anymore? How does an authentic encounter with Christ change how we view our past?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Shame loses its power when we are fully known and yet fully loved. Once she realized the Messiah knew her worst sins and still wanted a relationship with her, the opinions of the village women no longer mattered.

Day 5: The Apostle Paul — Persecutor to Preacher

Scripture: Acts 9:1-22 (NLT)

The Pivot: From violently arresting and killing Christians to becoming the greatest missionary of the early Church.

Teaching Notes:

- **The Zealot:** Read Acts 9:1-2. *"Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers."* Saul wasn't just a sinner; he was actively trying to

destroy the Church. He believed he was doing God's will.

- **The Blinding Light:** Read Acts 9:3-5. Jesus confronts Saul directly: "Why are you persecuting me?" This encounter shatters Saul's entire worldview. He is blinded physically, mirroring his previous spiritual blindness.
- **The Two Names (Saul vs. Paul):** It is a common misconception that Jesus changed Saul's name to Paul at his conversion. Actually, as a Jew born in a Roman city, he always had two names! "Saul" was his traditional Hebrew name (named after Israel's first king from his own tribe of Benjamin). "Paul" (Paulos) was his Roman name, as he was a Roman citizen. As God called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (the Greco -Roman world), he simply began using his Roman name to better connect with the people he was called to reach. God used his very background for His purpose!
- **Redirected Passion:** Read Acts 9:20. "*And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues...*" God didn't remove Paul's zeal, intelligence, or passion; He simply redirected it. Paul used the very same energy he had used to destroy the Church to build it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Saul was convinced he was righteous before his conversion. How is self-righteousness sometimes a harder barrier to overcome than obvious sin?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* When people are entangled in obvious sin (like the Samaritan woman), they usually know they need saving. Self-righteous people (like Saul the Pharisee) believe they are already saving themselves. Pride blinds us to our need for grace.
2. Ananias was understandably terrified to go to Saul (Acts 9:13-14). When has God asked you to show grace to someone you felt didn't deserve it or who intimidated you?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* This is a great practical application. Guide the class to think about holding grudges or writing people off. Ananias's obedience allowed the greatest missionary in history to receive his sight and calling. Our obedience in showing grace can unlock someone else's turnaround.
3. Think about the traits you have (stubbornness, talkativeness, ambition, etc.). How might God want to "turn around" those natural traits and redirect them for His Kingdom, just as He did with Paul's zeal?
 - *Suggested Response/Direction:* Help the class see that God-given personality traits aren't inherently bad, they just need to be sanctified. A stubborn person can become tenaciously loyal to truth. A talkative person can become a great evangelist. An ambitious person can become a great church builder.