

Focus Points

"Focus Points" are short activities that draw students into the lesson. They take only a few minutes to do. Many can be used as quick-start activities to engage the students and focus their attention at the beginning of class. Others may fit well during the lesson to reinforce a point and drive it home. Still others may serve as good wrap-up activities. "Focus Points" come in many forms. Choose and use them as you see fit.

Focus Point – Conversion of Saul

Acts 26:9-11 "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

The Apostle Paul

Here are four case studies about self-confidence and overconfidence. Your kids will enjoy them and they hold some good spiritual lessons for us.



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Case 1 – On Election Day, November 2nd, 1948, radio networks across the United States predicted that Thomas E. Dewey would announce his victory in the presidential election by 9:00 in the evening. The *Chicago Tribune* actually printed a blazing headline for the next day's paper: DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN. But, on November 3rd, Harry S. Truman was the President-elect of the United States!

Case 2 – The championship of professional football in the United States has been decided by the “Super Bowl Game” since 1967. Super Bowl III is regarded as one of the greatest upsets in sports history. At kickoff time, on January 12th, 1969, the powerful Baltimore Colts of the long-established National Football League (NFL) were expected to defeat the New York Jets of the upstart American Football League (AFL) by 18 points. At the end of the day, the Jets had defeated the Colts by a score of 16-7. The experts were wrong.



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There is another side to this story. “Broadway Joe” Namath, the Jets’ flamboyant quarterback, was just as confident that the Jets would win Super Bowl III. In fact, he boastfully predicted a Jets victory. And he was right!

1 – What dangers lie in being self-assured *and* being right about something?

Case 3 – *Sports Illustrated* called it the “Miracle on Ice.” Wikipedia describes it this way.

The "Miracle on Ice" refers to a hockey game, played on February 22nd, 1980, at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York, between Team USA and the defending gold medalists, the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union had won the gold medal in six of the seven previous Winter Olympic Games, and were the favorites to win once more in Lake Placid. The team consisted primarily of professional players with significant experience in international play. By contrast, the United States’ team consisted exclusively of amateur players, and was the youngest team in the tournament and in U.S. national team history.



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Thirteen days earlier, on February 9th, 1980, the Russian hockey team had annihilated Team USA, 10-3, in an exhibition game held at Madison Square Garden in New York. Afterward, the Russian coach was asked if the fact that it has been an exhibition game

meant that the Soviet skaters had not tried their hardest. He smiled smugly and said, "You are quite correct."

Clearly, the Soviets were favored to beat Team USA when they met again at the Olympics. Finishing the first period tied at 2-2, and the Soviets leading 3-2 following the second period, the U.S. team scored two goals in the final period, and held on to win, 4-3, in a major upset of their Cold War rival. In 1999, *Sports Illustrated* named the "Miracle on Ice" the top sports moment of the 20th century.

2 – What make us overconfident? List some things.

3 – By contrast, what should a disciple of Christ be like?

Case 4 – Tell a personal experience in which you or someone you know was absolutely confident about something and ended up being completely wrong, even put to shame. Encourage your students to tell their own stories of overconfidence.

4 – How does it feel to find out that you have been wrong?

5 – What should a person learn from an experience like this?

6 – How can an experience like this become a conversion experience for us?

7 – Read Acts 26:9-15. Then read 1 Corinthians 15:9 and 1 Timothy 1:12-16. Did Saul, later called Paul, ever forget the lesson he learned on the Damascus road? What do you think he learned from it?