



On your marks

When light from God shone into Saul's life, it knocked him for six. It is hard to imagine a greater turnaround than the conversion of Saul. When he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was on his way to arrest Christians, so convinced was he that they had got everything wrong. Three days later, he was now certain that Jesus was the Son of God and he was prepared to stand up and tell his fellow Jews that they had got it all wrong.

Get set

You will need:

- a pack of cards
- a camera/mobile phone with a flash
- some large, cut-out cardboard arrow shapes

You can find the story in Acts 9:1-31. There is a retelling of this story in The Barnabas Children's Bible (stories 326-328).

Go!

1. Opening up the story

Saul was a very devout Pharisee and the idea that the 'followers of the way' (as the Christians were called then) could claim that Jesus was God's son was pure heresy... the worst sort of lie! You couldn't have found anyone more determined to stamp out Christianity. The context of this story is that most Christians at this time were running for cover, in fear of their lives.

- Play some simple hide-and-seek games to pick up on the theme here. Either hide some small objects, which the group have to go and find, or, if you have the space, play a proper game of hide and seek.
- Alternatively, play a version of the game of pairs using only the number cards from a pack of cards. Place the cards face down on a large table and see how many 'same suit' or 'same number' pairs each person can find in a specified time period?
- Another way into this story is to play an adapted version of the game of battleships. Divide your group into two teams and give each team a 10 x 10 grid, with numbers across the top and letters down the side - this grid represents the streets of Damascus. Each team then secretly hides five sets of two or three Christians together somewhere on the grid. Each team in turn now tries to guess in which squares the Christians are hiding - Is it A1 or B7 (and so on)? Which team of Pharisees from Jerusalem can find and arrest all the other team's Christians first?

2. Telling the story

Give a brief background to the story and then divide everyone into two groups: one group will be the soldiers with Saul on the way to Damascus while the other group will be the Christians hiding in the city. Give each group time to discuss the following together:

- What sort of things will they be talking about together?
- What do they think will happen in the next couple of days?
- What are their main worries or hopes?
- What secret things are they thinking about?

Then share what the groups have come up with and build on this as you tell the story of what happened next.

Ananias was certainly a very brave man. There are all sorts of reasons why he should have perhaps ignored the vision he had (Acts 9:10-16). Set up a choice circus, in which half your group become Ananias' conscience, urging him not to go to see Saul, while the other half are his conscience, urging him to go to see Saul. Whose arguments will win the day?

3. Talking about the story

I wonder what was going through Saul's mind during those three days when he could not see. The light had been so bright that it had blinded him. When he did see again, everything looked different:

- Those who were once his enemies, he now saw as his brothers and sisters
- His former friends were now out to kill him
- He had previously thought Jesus was an impostor and a fraud, but he now believed him to be the Christ - the Son of God.

Saul's life had been turned upside down, but perhaps the light of God had to shine so dramatically for Saul because he was destined to reflect so much of that light in his missionary work around the Mediterranean.

Ask your group to imagine that they're working for the reporting team of *The Damascus Daily*. They've been sent to interview Saul following his experience.

- What sort of probing questions would they like to ask him?
- What sort of story would they write up for the newspaper?
- What would be their eye-catching headline?

Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus has become famous - it is often used to describe a complete change of heart and mind about something - 'a Damascus road experience'. It is important to recognise that this was not just Saul having a rethink about life. He really saw the light of God and he heard the voice of Jesus. In fact, it seems that he must have often spoken about it when preaching. We have two accounts in the New Testament (Acts 22 and 26) from Saul of what happened, where he tells his amazing story.

4. **Playing with the story**

For ideas linked to this story, see [Saul to Paul: craft and activity ideas](#). If you are looking for a more active drama response, you could try the following.

The escape over the walls of the city is really quite comical, although of course in reality it was very serious. It's now Saul's life that is in danger. Act out this story with your group working up scenes linked to:

- sneaking through the Damascus streets, dodging the religious police
- climbing up the walls
- sorting out the ropes and the basket
- saying goodbye and giving some last words of advice
- lowering the basket down precariously
- talking about what had happened once Saul disappears into the night - is it relief? sadness? fear?

5. **Reflecting on the story**

... a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. (Acts 9:3)

This was Saul's experience of the light of God in Jesus and it was this that he went on to reflect to many people, in many places in the years that followed. For a simple time of reflection on this story as a group, collect together the following:

- a camera/mobile phone with a flash
- some large, cut-out cardboard arrow shapes

Gather your group into a circle and put the arrows together, all facing the same direction, in the middle. The light from God meant that Saul's life was turned around and he saw things differently: Saul became Paul.

Talk with your group about the things that they would like to see changed in this world:

- What new beginnings do they hope for?
- What dead ends have they experienced that they would like to change?

As each change is mentioned, ask one of the children to turn one of the arrows to face the other direction - and at the same time the camera should flash - you could all say together: 'Shine your light, Lord, and help us to see things differently.'