

Saul (Paul) Becomes a Christian



Scripture References: [Acts 9:1-31](#) and recorded again later when Saul testifies in trials- [Acts 22:1-21](#) and [Acts 26:9-20](#)

Suggested Emphasis: When we are wrong, we should admit our mistakes and change to do things right.



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



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Story Overview:

Saul (later known by his Roman name, Paul) was an extremely zealous Jew who believed that those who followed Jesus were blaspheming God. He even hunted for followers of Jesus so he could arrest or kill them for what they believed. Saul had to face the fact that he had been wrong all of his life when Jesus came to him on the road to Damascus and blinded him with a bright light. Saul continued to the city of Damascus where he regained his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was baptised by a disciple named Ananias. Saul immediately began preaching the truth about Jesus and this made some people angry. His friends snuck him out of Damascus in a basket. After preaching in Jerusalem he had to escape danger there too. Saul changed from hating Jesus to loving Jesus.

Background Study:

[Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts](#)

Saul will later be known by his Roman name, Paul, but he is first introduced in Acts by his Jewish name, Saul.

The New Testament contains many writings eventually produced by the man who was later known as the Apostle Paul. These writings are in the form of epistles, or letters, to churches and individuals. Reading these letters reveals much about Saul but it is in Acts that we read how he was personally visited by Jesus and assigned the

task of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Saul was a zealous Jew who had been born in the city of Tarsus but grew up in Jerusalem. He studied under the best Jewish teachers including the well-respected teacher, Gamaliel ([Acts 22:3](#)). The first time Saul is mentioned in the New Testament is in [Acts 7:58 and 8:1](#). Saul stood in approval of the [Stoning of Stephen](#) and went so far as to watch after the clothes of those who threw the stones. Following that time Saul became zealous in trying to stamp out this new group of people (called "The Way") who had come to believe that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah and began to follow Jesus and his way of being God's people. But no matter how Saul and others persecuted those who followed Jesus the group kept getting bigger and bigger.

Saul was zealous for the faith and traditions of the Jewish people. His zealousness drove him to violently attempt to stamp out the followers of Jesus even all the way to Damascus. Understanding this gives real meaning to the drastic change that was about to take place in his life. What happened on the Road to Damascus was a miracle of God.

Among many others there are two significant things to note. Firstly, Jesus considers persecution of his followers as persecution of himself. Years later Saul, himself, will explain that Christians are the "body of Christ, and each is a part of it." ([1 Corinthians 12:27](#)). As Christians, if someone hurts you or me then Jesus feels our pain.

Secondly, Jesus was actually with Saul on that road. This was not simply a vision of Jesus. It is important to note this because Saul's legitimacy as an apostle rests on the fact that he was an actual witness of Jesus and his resurrection ([1 Corinthians 9:1](#), [1 Corinthians 15:3-11](#) and [Galatians 1:11-16](#)).

The opening words of this chapter "Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples" paints a graphic picture of what followers of Jesus thought of Saul. If Jesus had not come to Ananias in a vision in Damascus then Ananias would certainly not have risked his life to meet Saul. Jesus directed him to find Saul to a home on [Straight Street](#). This street still exists today in Old Damascus.

There were plenty of visions going around that day. At the same time Ananias was having a vision instructing him to go to Straight Street Saul was having a vision telling him to expect a visit from a disciple called Ananias.

Now, the great persecutor of the church finally understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the true king of Israel and the world, and that everyone needed to hear about him. At this point of understanding Saul regained his sight and was baptised. This event must have remained solid in his memory in years to come when he preached and wrote reflections such as those in [Titus 3:3-7](#).

Saul would have been a real enigma. The synagogue leaders would have been confused by this educated Jewish leader now seeming to speak in favour of the very thing he had so recently been militant about. And the followers of Jesus would surely have been fearful and sceptical of a man who had been terrorising their fellow believers.

Although this section reads as a continuous narrative it is possible, maybe probable, that during the three years following his conversion Saul left Damascus for Arabia and then came back to Damascus again before leaving for Jerusalem. The three years in Arabia could fit between verses 22 and 23. He later recounts the sequence of events in a letter to the churches of Galatia ([Galatians 1:11-18](#)).

Saul returned to a very angry situation after his three years in Arabia. We learn in one of his later letters that the governor in Damascus had the city guarded so they could arrest Saul ([2 Corinthians 11:32-33](#)). A wall surrounded the city so Saul's followers put him in a basket and lowered him out through a window in the wall.

Saul attempted to join the disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem but needed the help of Barnabas to convince others to accept him. Barnabas took him to the apostles and spoke on Saul's behalf. (Read more about Barnabas and Saul in the stories like the [Antioch Church](#) and [Paul's 1st Missionary Journey](#))

Saul stayed under the protection of the apostles. His background and education allowed him to move in the more educated circles and even participate in debates about Jesus. There was soon so much angry opposition against

Saul that the followers of Jesus again had to get him out of the city. They sent him to Tarsus.

Persecution had scattered many followers of Jesus and they shared the message of Jesus wherever they went. Now there was a period of peace. The Way, or Jesus-movement, grew in numbers during this time.



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Way to Introduce the Story:

“What would you do if you heard that there was someone in our town who was trying to hurt all Christians? We might have to meet in secret places. If you heard that that person was close by what would you do? You might have to use secret codes to tell other Christians where to meet. Has anyone ever seen a fish symbol like this? (Draw it on the board) Christians used to use that secret symbol to represent Jesus. That way mean people didn’t know what they were talking about. In the book of Acts we read about many people who became followers of Jesus or, in other words, Christians. There were also some people who got very angry that anyone would follow Jesus. One man, Saul, got so angry that he even killed followers of Jesus.”

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The Story:

Saul was born in the city of Tarsus but he grew up in Jerusalem. Saul was very intelligent and he had studied under a famous teacher named Gamaliel.

Saul had two names. His Jewish name was “Saul” and his Roman name was “Paul”.

Even though Saul believed in God he did not follow Jesus. In fact, he was an enemy to people who followed Jesus.

Saul hated these followers of Jesus and wanted to destroy the church. He even dragged men and women out of their houses and put them in prison for believing in Jesus. Another way to say you are hurting or threatening people for what they believe is to say you are “persecuting” them. Saul persecuted these disciples of Jesus. Everywhere they were very afraid of him.

Once, Saul asked the High Priest in Jerusalem for letters so he could take them to the Jewish leaders in the city of Damascus. He thought the leaders would hate these followers of Jesus, too. He thought they could help him arrest all of them there.

So Saul set out for the city of Damascus. As he and his companions were walking along the road to Damascus something totally unexpected happened. A bright light shone down and everyone stopped.

The light was so bright that it made Saul blind. The others in the group saw the light and could hear something but only Paul could hear a voice that said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

Paul was blind but he could hear the voice clearly. "Who are you?" he asked. Then he heard the answer, "I am Jesus, and you have been persecuting me. Now get up and go into the city."

Saul was shocked. This was Jesus? But he thought Jesus was dead! Now Saul knew the truth, Jesus is alive!

And that was not all. Jesus had asked Saul, "Why are you persecuting ME?"

Saul had been saying to everyone that Jesus was dead. He had persecuted these followers of Jesus and even thrown them in prison. But now he knew he had been wrong all of this time. They belong to Jesus so when Paul had been persecuting them it was actually like hurting Jesus himself.

What would happen to Saul? Would Jesus ever forgive him for what he had done? If he changed would the Jesus-followers ever forgive him? Can people ever forgive a man who had done such bad things? Saul had many things to think about.

But Saul needed help. He could not even see where he was going. Since Saul was blind the others who were with him led him to the city of Damascus.

Meanwhile, in another part of the city there was a man called Ananias. He believed in Jesus.

Jesus came to Ananias in a vision and said that Ananias should go and meet Saul. He would be waiting in a house on the street called "Straight Street".

Now it was Ananias' time to be shocked! Visit Saul? Saul was the man who was persecuting people who believed in Jesus. How could Jesus ask him to go to see Saul? Ananias was very frightened. What would Saul do to him?

But, in the vision, Jesus told Ananias that he had chosen Saul to do a very important job. Jesus had chosen Saul to be the teacher to the Gentiles (all of the people who were not Jews).

So Ananias obeyed Jesus. He went to Straight Street and found Saul. He touched Saul and said, "Brother Saul, Jesus, the one who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

As soon as Ananias said this something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. Then he got up and was baptised.

Now that Saul knew the truth about Jesus he wanted to tell everyone. He preached to the people in Damascus. Many people began to believe in Jesus when they heard Saul preach.

But not everyone was happy Saul was preaching about Jesus. Some were very angry. They began guarding the city gates so they could catch and kill Saul if he tried to leave the city.

But Saul's friends had a great idea. Late one night they put Saul in a basket and lowered the basket over the wall. Saul escaped!

The followers of Jesus in Damascus had begun to trust Saul but there were still many followers in other places that remembered how he had once been their enemy. When Saul went back to Jerusalem the followers there did not trust Saul and did not want him to be with them.

But Saul continued to do what Jesus had told him to do. He was a very different person now. When he used to live in Jerusalem he told people NOT to follow Jesus. Now he told them that they SHOULD follow Jesus.

But over and over Saul made people angry. Finally, the other followers took Saul to the port of Caesarea and put him on a ship heading to Tarsus. Tarsus was the city Saul had grown up in.

After this time there was a time of peace for the churches. Many more people began to follow Jesus.

When Saul met Jesus he stopped doing bad things and began to follow Jesus. What do you think Jesus wants you to do?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. [Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#) or [click here to download the pictures to print.](#)

Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Or use the video below.

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Review Questions:

1. What is Saul's other name? Paul
2. Before becoming a follower of Jesus, what did Saul do? Searched out and killed followers because they believed in Jesus.
3. What happened to Saul on the road to Damascus? Jesus came to him in a bright light and blinded him.
4. Who baptised Saul? Ananias
5. How did Saul escape from Damascus? Followers of Jesus lowered him over the city walls at night in a basket

Song Suggestions:

- [Jesus Hokey Pokey Song](#)
- [Deep and Wide Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Have children act out situations in which they have to admit that they are wrong.
- Decorate any food container (ice cream, margarine tub, etc.) to look like a basket.
- If you have access to Google Maps or Google Earth or an Atlas look up Damascus and find the probable location of the Straight Street where Ananias went to find Saul. The modern name for the street in Old Damascus is "The Avenue of Bab Sharqi and Medhat Pasha Souq". Talk about how modern Damascus is different than Damascus at the time Saul was converted.

- To review, either you or the children can draw a large outline of Paul on a whiteboard or piece of paper (even drawing with a stick in the sand works fine if you are outside). Then, after you have taught the lesson ask the children to think about what they have just learned from the Bible. Have them write descriptive words and/or draw pictures inside and around the outlined illustration of Paul. When you see what the children are writing or drawing you may be surprised or encouraged by what insights they have picked up from the story. This is also a good opportunity to correct or add to anything you might not have covered as



well as you could have when you were teaching.

If you prefer, you can [download and print the illustration of Paul provided here](#) and then have the children write and draw on it for the review.

- Alternatively, if you are teaching a series of lessons about Paul then you might draw an outline of him on a large poster or paper and then add descriptive words about him each time you study a new lesson.
- [Click here for the 16 lessons about the Life of Paul grouped together as a set.](#)

Crafts:

- Do a weaving project to make a basket.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Saul Becomes a Christian" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "Saul Becomes a Christian" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Visual Aid: Colour pictures covers both Philip and the Ethiopian and the story of Saul's conversion \(Acts 9\) \(It is in pdf. and can be viewed on-screen. However, I found it easier to save it to my computer and then view it.\) at <http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/From%20Persecutor%20to%20Preacher%20English.pdf>](#)
- [Crossword puzzle at http://www.sermons4kids.com/transformer_crossword.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/transformer_crossword.htm)

- [A good selection of puzzles and games to print at http://www.gardenofpraise.com/bibl64s.htm](http://www.gardenofpraise.com/bibl64s.htm)
- (About Saul) [A good selection of puzzles and games to print at http://www.gardenofpraise.com/bibl34s.htm](http://www.gardenofpraise.com/bibl34s.htm)
- [Craft: Doorknob hanger from http://www.sundayschoolcrafts.net/paul-doorknob-hanger.php](http://www.sundayschoolcrafts.net/paul-doorknob-hanger.php)
- [Review: Create a "passport" that covers the life of Paul. Good visual ideas and activities. Could be split up to go with several lessons or taught all together as a review of previous lessons concerning Paul found at http://kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz/2013/03/review-of-pauls-life.html](http://kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz/2013/03/review-of-pauls-life.html)
- [Room Decorations: A wall scene that depicts the basket being lowered down the city wall of Damascus. You'll have to scroll down the page at http://kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz/2012/08/bible-class-tent-ideas.html](http://kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz/2012/08/bible-class-tent-ideas.html)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/paul-conversion-1st-journey/>

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