



Messy Saul/Paul

Jesus asks all sorts of people to follow him – even when they've made terrible mistakes in the past

Activity time

Try these activities and see if you can start guessing what might happen in our story today. If you can't get exactly these materials, just see what you can find around the house instead!

1 Bright light



You will need: a magnifying glass or hand mirror; paper; a sunny day; sunglasses

See how sharply you can focus the light of the sun through your magnifying glass or using your mirror, bringing the light to a point on the sheet of paper. If you're really patient, the paper might even catch fire (so have an adult on stand-by with a bucket of water). Observe how bright the light gets – you might even need sunglasses to protect your eyes. If it's a dull day, you could experiment with focusing the light from a desk lamp or torch instead of the sun. (Remember never to look at the sun directly or you risk damaging your eyes.)

Talk about the bright light you've been watching. Did it dazzle you? When Saul was on a journey from Jerusalem to Damascus, a sudden dazzling light appeared that only he could see, and something life-changing happened to him – so life-changing that he ended up changing his name from Saul to Paul.

2 Blindfold challenge

You will need: a blindfold; a bit of space

Blindfold one person and see if you can lead them by the hand safely around your house or garden. You could create an obstacle course if you have space.

Talk about how it feels not to be able to see. When Saul met Jesus in a dazzling light on the road to Damascus, he was unable to see for three days. Do you think those three days of lockdown gave Saul time to think about what had just happened to him? Is lockdown giving you time to think about big questions?

3 Damascus model house



You will need: empty junk boxes, packets, tubes, pots and so on; scissors; glue; sticky tape; pens; paper

I wonder what the house in Damascus was like, where Saul was taken? Pictures of old houses in Damascus show rounded arches around courtyards inside the house, with beautiful tiled floors and walls, lots of green plants and often a pool with a fountain in the centre of the courtyard. Try making a small version of the courtyard of Judas' house in Straight Street out of the bits and pieces you've collected. Maybe you could even make tiny mosaic tiles? You could make small figures from today's story to act out what happened – Judas who owned the house (this was a different Judas from the one who betrayed Jesus), Saul and Ananias who was a Jesus-follower.

Talk about how the Jesus-followers like Ananias might have felt when they found out they'd got this dangerous man in their city. What could they have done to Saul while he was unable to see, eat or drink? When they eventually baptised him, do you think they might have used that pool in the courtyard?

Celebration

Try acting out the story from [Acts 9](#). Here's a script or you could just read straight from the Bible. You'll need a narrator, Saul, Jesus and Ananias

NARRATOR: Things weren't going well for the Jesus-followers not long after Jesus had left them and sent his Holy Spirit. They were being arrested and even killed, just for following Jesus, and many had to leave their homes in Jerusalem and run away to far-off cities like Damascus. There was one man in Jerusalem, a religious leader, who wanted to see these Jesus-people wiped off the face of the earth. His name was Saul.

SAUL: I need to have these Jesus-followers killed! I've heard there are lots of them hiding out in Damascus. I know! I'll go to Damascus and arrest the lot of them!

NARRATOR: When Saul had almost reached Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him and he fell to the ground.

SAUL: Aaaargh!

JESUS: Saul! Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?

SAUL: Who are you?

JESUS: I'm Jesus, the one you are so cruel to. Now get up and go into Damascus, where you will be told what to do.

NARRATOR: Saul got up from the ground, and when he opened his eyes...

SAUL: I can't see a thing!

NARRATOR: He was led by the hand to Damascus, and for three days he was blind and didn't eat or drink. Meanwhile in Damascus, there was a Jesus-follower called Ananias.

JESUS: Ananias, get up and go to Judas' house on Straight Street. When you get there, you will find a man named Saul. Saul is praying, and he has seen a vision. In this vision, he saw a man named Ananias coming to him and putting his hands on him, so that he could see again.

ANANIAS: Lord, a lot of people have told me about the terrible things this man has done to your followers in Jerusalem. Now he's come to arrest anyone who worships you.

JESUS: Go! I have chosen this man to tell all sorts of people about me.

NARRATOR: Ananias left and went into the house where Saul was staying. Ananias placed his hands on him.

ANANIAS: Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me. He is the same one who appeared to you along the road. He wants you to be able to see and to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

NARRATOR: Suddenly something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised. Then he ate and felt much better. He stayed in Damascus and told the Jewish people there about Jesus being God's rescuer, which completely confused them. They thought he wanted to kill all the Jesus-followers, not join them, or try to make other people Jesus-followers too!

- How do you think Saul felt after that road to Damascus experience with Jesus?
- If you were Ananias, would you have been brave enough to go to see Saul in Straight Street?
- What do you think it's like to suffer for what you believe in?
- Why do you think Jesus wanted Saul working for him? Weren't there plenty of Jesus-followers already, without choosing such a baddie?
- Why do you think Saul changed his name to Paul?
- Where is it dangerous to be a Jesus-follower these days?

Prayer: Light a candle for people who are bullied for their faith. They might be people in countries which are hostile to Christians or people in schools, workplaces or colleges where people are unkind to them because of their faith. You could read [Matthew 5:10](#), where Jesus says: ‘Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’

You could say the [Lord’s Prayer](#) and the [Messy Grace](#).

Mealttime

Try a Middle Eastern theme with flatbreads, hummus, soft cheese and olives to remind you of Saul in Damascus.