

Leader: **"After Jesus died on the cross, rose again, and ascended into heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit to His followers—the first Christians. The Holy Spirit gave them strength and boldness, and they shared the good news of Jesus throughout the region.**

Have you ever had an enemy who became a friend? Pause for kids to process and answer the question. **Even the first Christians had enemies, people who didn't like them and wanted to keep them from telling others about Jesus.**

The book of Acts tells about one of their worst enemies—a Jewish man named Saul who was sometimes called Paul. (Maybe you've heard of him!) Saul was devoted to God, but the things Saul knew about Jesus didn't match any of his expectations for a messiah. After all, would a king be killed on a cross? Saul persecuted the followers of Jesus and captured some of them as prisoners. Some followers of Jesus were even killed!"

"Saul" steps near the stage area with chain and shackles in hand, if available, to convey the idea that he is on the hunt to capture Christians.

"Did you hear that? Pause for kids to answer. **I think someone is coming. Saul steps onto the stage area, his face intense. Shhh ... it's Saul! Please stay quiet. We don't want him to know you are here!**

Leader: Nervously. **Um ... hey, Saul! Where are you off to?"**

Saul: **"I'm actually on my way to Damascus, but I'm on the lookout for those so-called Christians. I've been given permission to capture more of them. "**

Leader: **"I'm sure they're somewhere."** Signal to the kids to stay quiet.

Saul: **"Hmm ... well, if you see any Christians, please send a messenger to let me know."** Saul starts to walk away.

Leader: To the kids. **"Whoa, that was close! Saul continued on his way to Damascus. Saul keeps walking slowly across the stage area Suddenly, he was blinded by a light that shone from heaven!"** Invite kids to turn their flashlights on and shine them at Saul (but not directly in his eyes!) If a spotlight is available, shine it on Saul.

Saul falls to the ground. "As Saul fell to the ground, a voice said, "Saul! Saul! Why are you opposing me?" (Acts 9:4)."

Saul: Crouch on the ground and look confused. "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5).

Leader: **"I am Jesus," he replied. "I am the one you are opposing. Now get up and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do"** (Acts 9:5). Instruct kids to turn off their flashlights and place them back in their laps Turn off the spotlight, if used.

There were others with Saul on the road, and they heard a voice but didn't see the blinding light. They led Saul into Damascus, for Saul had become blind. Invite two kids to the stage area to lead the now-blind Saul from one end of the stage to the other.

For three days, Saul wouldn't eat or drink anything, and he kept praying. Saul's two friends leave the stage area. *Saul kneels as though praying.*

While Saul was in Damascus, a follower of Jesus named Ananias was living there. He could have been one of the very same people Saul had planned to put in chains. But Jesus appeared in a vision and told Ananias, “Saul is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.”

Ananias couldn’t believe Jesus wanted him to go to Saul, who was famous for hating Christians! But Jesus said to him, “Go! I have chosen this man to work for me. He will announce my name to the Gentiles and to their kings. He will also announce my name to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for me” (Acts 9:15–16).

Jesus had a plan to completely change Saul through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus would transform Saul into a missionary!

So Ananias didn’t listen to his fear; he listened to Jesus. When he found Saul, Ananias greeted him saying, “Brother Saul ... you saw the Lord Jesus.” *Saul looks up as though listening to someone, still unable to see.* “He appeared to you on the road as you were coming here. He has sent me so that you will be able to see again. You will be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 9:17).

Placing his hands on Saul, Ananias prayed, and what looked like fish scales fell from Saul’s eyes.” *Saul: Standing up with eyes wide open. "I can see again!"*

Leader: "Instead of arresting the followers of Jesus, Saul was baptized and became a Christian himself. Saul went out to proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Son of God.

Everyone who knew him was surprised that Saul—a famous enemy of Jesus’ followers—was now calling Jesus the Messiah. What a change! Saul, who was later called Paul, went on to write many of the letters we can read in the Bible. Because of Paul’s message, many, many people chose to follow Jesus.

The Spirit of God transformed an enemy into an apostle of Jesus. *Saul stands in front of the kids, a smile on his face.* The Holy Spirit turned Paul’s life around and made him a completely different person. In the same way, the Spirit of God can change us and make us new. Nothing we do can stand in God’s way. The Holy Spirit changes us."

Leader Tip: If time allows, encourage small groups of kids to reenact the story of Paul’s conversion using their flashlights and including as many details from the story as they can recall.

Collect the flashlights and thank kids and your adult volunteer for their help in telling the story.

Leader Tip: Kids may have different ideas (or none at all) of who the Holy Spirit is. Help them understand that the Holy Spirit is the presence of God in followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is part of the Trinity—three persons who are all one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to every Jesus-follower!

WONDER TRUTH: The Holy Spirit Changes Us

GOD'S BIG STORY - Acts 9: Jesus confronts Saul on the road to Damascus and miraculously changes him from an enemy of Christianity into a Christ-follower through the Holy Spirit's transforming power.

WORD OF WONDER: Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect. —Romans 12:2



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