



GETTING STARTED

What's the best book you've ever read, and what made it so good?

MY STORY

What is your earliest childhood memory? What is a good memory or a bad one?

Why do you think you remember it? What significance if any do you think it had?

DIGGING DEEPER

Imagine writing an autobiography one day. What do you think you might include in your book from your life so far? Who have been the significant people and what have been the significant experiences?

INTO THE BIBLE

Read through the story below of the Apostle Paul - previously know as Saul. He was one of the most important and effective leaders in the church after Jesus died but as you'll read below he initially opposed the church (or "the Way" as he called it).

ACTS 22:3-13

³ Then Paul said, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and I was brought up and educated here in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. As his student, I was carefully trained in our Jewish laws and customs. I became very zealous to honour God in everything I did, just like all of you today. ⁴ And I persecuted the followers of the Way, hounding some to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them in prison. ⁵ The high priest and the whole council of elders can testify that this is so. For I received letters from them to our Jewish brothers in Damascus, authorizing me to bring the followers of the Way from there to Jerusalem, in chains, to be punished.

⁶ "As I was on the road, approaching Damascus about noon, a very bright light from heaven suddenly shone down around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

⁸ "Who are you, lord?' I asked.

"And the voice replied, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, the one you are persecuting.'

⁹ The people with me saw the light but didn't understand the voice speaking to me.

¹⁰ "I asked, 'What should I do, Lord?'

"And the Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you are to do.'

¹¹ "I was blinded by the intense light and had to be led by the hand to Damascus by my companions. ¹² A man named Ananias lived there. He was a godly man, deeply devoted to the law, and well regarded by all the Jews of Damascus. ¹³ He came and stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight.' And that very moment I could see him!

1. What do you think Paul was thinking and feeling at various stages of his "story"? Explain.
2. Paul did a lot of bad things and yet despite this God saw qualities in him that He could use for good. What might some of these have been?
3. Ever thought to yourself, "I'm not good enough to be a Christian" or "I'm not a very good Christian - surely God has given up on me!"? What do you think Paul would say to you?

GETTING PERSONAL

1. Which stage of Paul's story in coming to follow Jesus most closely parallels where you are now?
 - "I persecuted the followers of the Way..."
 - "Who are you, lord?'
 - What should I do, Lord?'
 - "[Godly people] came and stood beside me..."
 - "I could see..."
2. Think back to the question about writing your autobiography. What chapter title might you use to describe the stage of life you're in now in your story? Explain.
3. God continues to write His Story and wants our stories to join with His as we invite him into our lives. At what times has God most clearly been active in your story? What experiences have you had in which He seemed most real to you?



GETTING STARTED

- Suppose you were to somehow discover that one day you'd be the author of a best selling book. What would be your guess as to what sort of book it might be: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comic, history, sports, theology, science, etc. What might the book might be about?

MY STORY

- What words would you want people to use if they were asked to describe you at the end of your life? What sort of person do you want to grow up to be?

DIGGING DEEPER

Looking ahead in your life, try to complete each of the following sentences. We could all think of something funny to say but try to be serious. You may not be able to come up with an answer to all of them but try to finish at least one sentence:

- *“The thing I most want to do with my life is...”*
- *“The thing in life I’m most looking forward to is...”*
- *“The thing in life I’m most anxious about is...”*
- *“The one thing I want to achieve in life is...”*
- *“The thing I least want to be said about my life is...”*

INTO THE BIBLE

In session 1 we read the first part of the Apostle Paul’s story. In this session we look at part 2 - what God called him to do after he had met Jesus on the road to Damascus and surrendered his life to Him.

ACTS 22:13-21

¹³ [Ananias] came and stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And that very moment I could see him!

¹⁴ “Then he told me, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and hear him speak. ¹⁵ For you are to be his witness, telling everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ What are you waiting for? Get up and be baptized. Have your sins washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.’

¹⁷ “After I returned to Jerusalem, I was praying in the Temple and fell into a trance. ¹⁸ I saw a vision of Jesus saying to me, ‘Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won’t accept your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ “But Lord,’ I argued, ‘they certainly know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰ And I was in complete agreement when your witness Stephen was killed. I stood by and kept the coats they took off when they stoned him.’

²¹ “But the Lord said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles!’”

1. What do you think Paul was thinking and feeling at various stages of his “story”? Explain.
2. Paul was worried about accepting him. When we choose to be a follower of Jesus not everyone is happy. What ridicule or criticism have you faced because you are a Christian or because you go to church/youth group? How do you cope with this?
3. If someone were to say to you, “I’m not ready to become a Christian because I’m not sure I’ll be able to remain good enough to please God”, what would you say to them?

GETTING PERSONAL

1. Which stage of Paul’s story in serving Jesus most closely parallels what Jesus might be saying to you now?
 - *“Be My witness...”*
 - *“I have chosen you...”*
 - *“Be baptised...”*
 - *“Have your sins washed away...”*
 - *“I will send you...”*.
2. Think about the next chapter in your autobiography. What might it be called? Where does God fit (if at all) in the next chapter? What steps is He calling you to make with Him? Explain.