



## Word on the Street Discussion Time: Acceptance

*You could use this discussion starter with your family, your friends, or maybe in your class or your Church youth group. Read the story at the top and use the questions to start discussion. Then read the Bible story and talk through the second set of questions. It will probably take about half an hour. You could finish with a prayer based on your discussion.*

Class 9JB had been together for three years, and had gained a reputation in their school as a 'nice class'. Teachers liked them; there were no trouble makers; everyone got on with one another. And in that time, no one had left the class, and no one had joined it. They were a settled group who liked their school and each other.

Then, one day towards the end of their third year together, the teacher announced that a new boy was joining 9JB from a different school. Some of the class, including a Christian named Dez, got ready to welcome the newbie, but their faces fell when they laid eyes on him. With his ghostly pale skin and jet black hair, it was immediately clear that he wasn't going to fit in with the group of trendies, townies and sk8ers who made up 9JB.

The welcome party disbanded, and the new boy, Zach, drifted to a lonely desk at the back of the room. He looked particularly depressed as the rest of the class stared at him as if he was from another planet. The school day began, and for the entire morning, no one managed to say a single word to him.

In the dining-hall at lunchtime, Dez felt really bad, His conscience was telling him to go and make friends with Zach, but his feet wouldn't move. He could tell that he and Zach wouldn't have much in common, and he didn't want to risk his own position of popularity in the class. Seeing that Dez was looking at him, Zach offered a weak smile in his direction.

Dez turned away and headed off to the field to play football. He was sure someone else would go and make friends with the new kid eventually.

- How does this story make you feel?
- What do you think Dez should've done differently? Why?
- If Dez is a Christian, is it his responsibility to make friends with Zach? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been part of a big group when someone who was different in some way tried to join? What happened?
- Have you ever been that outsider? How did you feel?

### **Read Acts 9: 23-28**

- Saul had overseen the persecution of many Christians – including the stoning of Stephen.
- Put yourself in Barnabus' shoes here – how would you have felt?
- What does this story tell us about how we should treat outsiders?
- Pray together that you'll receive God's help in seeking to live as 'children of light.'

An extended version of this discussion appears in *The Ideas Factory: 100 Adaptable Discussion Starters for Teens*, by Martin Saunders, the Editor of *Youthwork* magazine. It is reproduced here with his kind permission.

## Acts 9: 23-28

After this had gone on quite a long time, some Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul got wind of it. They were watching the city gates around the clock so they could kill him. Then one night the disciples engineered his escape by lowering him over the wall in a basket.

Back in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't trust him one bit. Then Barnabas took him under his wing. He introduced him to the apostles and stood up for him, told them how Saul had seen and spoken to the Master on the Damascus Road and how in Damascus itself he had laid his life on the line with his bold preaching in Jesus' name.

After that he was accepted as one of them, going in and out of Jerusalem with no questions asked, uninhibited as he preached in the Master's name.

## THE MESSAGE

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