



Word on the Street Discussion Time: Prisoner to President

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.

In 1990, the whole world was watching in when Nelson Mandela was released from prison having served 27 years of a life sentence. He had been charged with treason for disagreeing (sometimes violently) with the South African government's laws on apartheid, a system that classified citizens into racial groups and prioritised the rights and needs of white South Africans above all others.

Under these laws, hospitals and schools were divided by racial groups, with non-white citizens receiving inferior public services to whites and non-white South Africans could no longer vote or have a passport.

During his time in prison, Mandela became one of the most well-known figures in the struggle against apartheid. Upon his release in the year apartheid was abolished, he knew that the battle was far from over, and began working on his political career.

Four years after his release, South Africa held the first election where politicians of all races could enter. Nelson Mandela won the vote and, became the country's first black President in the process.

- Nelson Mandela was kept in prison for 27 years, and for much of that time he was left in isolation. How do you think that tested his faith in his cause?
- Mandela went from being in prison to being President in the space of four years. How do you think life would have changed for him in this time?
- Think carefully about your own beliefs, which are important to you? Are there any you would be willing to go to prison for? Try to be as honest as you can.

Read Galatians 3:26-29

- In Galatians Jesus tells us we are all equal, and all welcome to follow God. As a Christian do you feel equal to others?
- As Christians, we should welcome others and make them feel equal. What are some ways of doing that?
- What do you think it means to 'belong to Christ'?

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.