



Enter the Story

Signs & Wonders

A narrative about the miraculous work of God through His new community.

THE BIBLE

Acts 3 -5

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- *Craft a newspaper headline about a crime that was committed using only the names of the people in the room. What was the crime? Who was the victim? Who is the suspect? And who is the arresting officer?*

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- One Week to Live – The final week in the life of Jesus
- Hour of Darkness – The crucifixion of Jesus
- Resurrection – The return of the King
- New Beginnings – Jesus' Ascension & the birth of the church

Hear the Story

Scene One: Healing a Beggar

As two of the apostles, Peter and John were entering the Temple for prayer, a disabled man begged them for money. The man had been unable to walk since birth.

Peter and John stopped and looked directly at the man, and Peter said, *"I don't have any silver or gold, but I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk!"*

Then Peter took the man by the hand and helped him stand up. As he stood, the man's feet and ankles were instantly made strong. He jumped up and began to walk! The man walked into the Temple with Peter and John, leaping and thanking God!

The people inside the Temple were amazed to see this man walking and leaping – he was the beggar they'd seen every day on the way to the Temple.

As Peter and John left, people rushed after them and surrounded them. The man who was once crippled clung tightly to the apostles. Peter turned and said to the crowd, *"Why are you so surprised? We didn't heal him – it was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who did this so that Jesus, the one who was rejected and crucified, would be given glory."*

Offended by what Peter was saying, Jewish leaders commanded the temple guards to arrest Peter and John and take them to prison. The leaders believed that Peter was a false teacher intending to stir an uprising. But many saw and even more heard about this healing. Because of this, thousands believed in Jesus as the true Messiah.

Scene Two: Boldness

The religious leaders discussed, *"What should we do with these men? The miracle they performed was undeniable – everyone saw it. But we must stop them from making these claims about Jesus' death and resurrection."*

So the leaders ordered Peter and John to never teach or heal in Jesus' name again. But the apostles answered them, *"Whom should we listen to – you or God? We can't stop from sharing about what we've seen and heard!"* The leaders threatened to further punish them but feared it would cause a riot. So the next morning, Peter and John were released from prison.

When they told the other believers what had happened, they began praying together out loud, asking God to give them boldness in the face of opposition. All of a sudden, the house shook! God's Spirit filled each one of them. Right away, they went out boldly, sharing about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

And many more people were added to the church that day. The community of believers became of one heart and mind. They combined all their possessions and made sure that everyone had what they needed to live.

Scene Three: Opening the Gates

Wherever the apostles went, crowds followed them. Sick people were carried into the street so that Peter's shadow would fall across them as he walked by – and they would be healed. People with many kinds of illnesses came to the apostles, and all of them were made well.

When the high priest and some of the Jewish leaders heard what the apostles were doing, they became filled with jealousy. So, they sent guards to capture the apostles and put them in prison.

But during the night, an angel of God opened the gates of the prison and led the apostles out! The angel told them, *"Go to the Temple and share the message of life about Jesus!"*

So, at sunrise, the apostles entered the Temple again and began teaching.

Before long, someone alerted the High Priest: *"The men you put in jail last night are back teaching in the Temple!"* This was puzzling to the Jewish leaders because the jail was still locked and guarded!

So, the High Priest sent his guards to capture the apostles once again. When he saw them, he shouted, *"We ordered you to stop teaching in Jesus' name, yet you keep spreading your message and blaming us for his death!"*

Peter boldly answered the high priest, *"Our obedience is to God – not to human authorities. Our God raised Jesus from the dead after you killed Him. God did this so that the Jews would find forgiveness and turn from their own ways back to God's ways."*

Peter's words enraged the leaders so much that they planned to kill the apostles. But one of the Jewish leaders, a well-respected teacher named Gamaliel (ge-MAH-lee-el), stood up and ordered that the apostles be taken out of the room.

He said to the other Jewish leaders, *“Be careful about what you are planning to do with these men. There have been others who have claimed to be great, like Jesus did, and gathered followers just like these men. But eventually, their movements came to nothing, and their followers scattered. My advice is to leave these men alone.”*

“If they’re doing this in their own power, they’ll fail on their own. But if what they say is true and from God, you might be fighting against God.”

The other leaders accepted Gamaliel’s advice. The apostles were brought back into the room and beaten. Before releasing them, the High Priest again ordered them to never teach or heal in Jesus’ name.

As the apostles left, they were not discouraged. In fact, they were filled with joy. They considered it an honor to be worthy to suffer for the cause of Jesus. Each day, the apostles continued to share in the Temple and publically declare that Jesus was the true Messiah.

Retell the Story

- Who did Peter & John encounter on the way to the Temple?
- What happened during this encounter?
- How did the people inside the Temple react?
- How did the Jewish leaders react?
- What happened to Peter & John?
- What did the Jewish leaders instruct Peter & John to quit doing?
- What was Peter & John’s response?
- What kind of community was being formed?
- What happened to the apostles while they were in prison?
- What did they do the next morning?
- Who defended the Apostles before the ruling Jewish Council?
- What did the Apostles continue to do each day?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?

- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- How would you describe the apostles in this story? Say the first thing that comes to your mind.
- How would you describe the Jewish leaders in this story? Again, say the first thing that comes to your mind.
- Why do you think the Jewish leaders were filled with jealousy, outrage, and anger towards the apostles?
- Why do you think the religious leaders told the apostles not to teach or heal in Jesus' name?
- Why do you think Jesus' followers demonstrated such boldness in the face of potentially negative outcomes?
- What do you think about Gamaliel's advice to the other Jewish leaders?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?

- From this story, what do you notice about God’s character or His qualities?

Join the Story

1) FILLED WITH BOLDNESS

Clearly, the early followers of Jesus were filled with boldness. What do you think it meant for them to follow Jesus in this way? What does it mean for you to be filled with boldness when it comes to your faith? What do you think that looks like, or what should it look like on a daily basis?

2) SIGNS & WONDERS

This story is filled with signs and wonders. Have you had any personal encounters with the miraculous? Do you think God still performs signs and wonders like this in our world today? Why or why not?

3) WISE COUNSEL

While the rest of the Jewish counsel is ready to execute the apostles, Gamaliel, a respected teacher of the law, reasoned with the group (Acts 5:33-39) his counsel is that what God is doing cannot be stopped. Do you agree with his assessment? If so, what does that mean for our world today?

God,

We are amazed at how You work in wonderful and miraculous ways. We admit that too often, we focus on the messiness of life instead of the miracles that You are working all around us. Give us your eyes to see the work that You are up to in this world, and give us courage to step out of our comfort zones to accept Your invitation to boldly share Your message and become part of a community who lives in partnership with You.