



Enter the Story

New Beginnings

A narrative about the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of a new kind of community.

THE BIBLE

John 21; Acts 1-2, 4

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- *What's the best group you've ever been a part of? What made it so great?*

Rewind the Story

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

- No Ordinary Man – Supernatural experiences with Jesus
- 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

Hear the Story

Scene One: Ascension

In the weeks after His death and resurrection, Jesus met with His followers many times. He even made them breakfast over a charcoal fire, cooking fish that they'd caught. Everyone who saw Jesus was full of joy – He was really alive! In all, He spent forty days with them, providing many convincing proofs that He was indeed alive; all the while, He continued to teach them about the Kingdom of God.

Because of this, they believed that Jesus was the true Messiah that the Jews had been waiting for – a new kind of king who would lead them in a new way of life in God’s kingdom.

After this, the disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshipped Him, but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.”*

But Jesus’ followers kept asking Him, *“Have you returned to free Israel from foreign rule and restore Israel’s kingdom now?”*

Jesus replied, *“Only God knows what will unfold in the future. But you will be given power when God’s Spirit fills you. You’ll go everywhere, telling everyone about me. Here in Jerusalem, throughout this region – in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Immediately after Jesus said this, He was taken up in a cloud, and His followers watched in amazement. After He disappeared from their sight, His followers still stared into the sky to try to see Him. As they looked up, two angels suddenly appeared, standing next to them.

“Why are you still looking into the sky?” the angels asked. *“Jesus was taken to heaven, but someday he’ll return in the same way you just watched him go!”*

Scene Two: Empowered

A few weeks later, a group of about a hundred and twenty of Jesus’ followers gathered in a home. All of a sudden, they heard an extremely loud noise - it sounded like a roaring windstorm that shook the house!

Then, what looked like flames of fire appeared and settled on every person. Each of them was filled with God’s Spirit and began speaking languages they’d never learned!

At that time, Jews from all over the world were staying in Jerusalem for a special festival called Pentecost. When they heard the roaring noise, a crowd gathered outside the house where the disciples were, to see what was going on.

As they got closer, they heard Jesus' disciples sharing in a multitude of languages about the great things God had done.

Astonished, the crowd began to ask, *"How can this happen? These are people from Galilee, but each of us – no matter where we are from – hear these people speaking our own language. What does this mean?"* But some in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, *"They're just drunk, that's all!"*

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, stepped forward to explain to the crowd what was happening: *"Listen! We are not drunk, as some of you have suggested. What you're seeing are the predictions of the prophets coming true.*

We are eyewitnesses to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah! And now God's Spirit has been poured out on us, which is what you've seen and heard today."

People's hearts were filled with sadness because they realized that Jesus – their Messiah – had come but was overlooked, tortured, and crucified. They asked Jesus' disciples, *"What can we do?"*

Peter told them, *"Turn from your ways, to God's ways. Jesus is alive – in Him, you'll find forgiveness, and you'll be filled with God's Spirit."*

That day, over three thousand people chose to follow Jesus as Messiah. They were baptized, becoming a part of a new community known as the church. (The Greek term for church is *ekklesia*, which means those "called out" by God.)

Scene Three: A New Community

These followers of Jesus became deeply committed to God's ways and to one another – praying, learning, sharing everything, and helping anyone in need – all with great joy and generosity. Every day, they ate together and remembered Jesus' life and sacrifice.

Twelve of Jesus' disciples became known as apostles and led the church, teaching people how to follow the ways of Jesus.

Everyone saw God do amazing things through the church - miracles and healing – and more and more people joined the church every day.

Retell the Story

- After His resurrection, what did His followers want from Jesus?
- What did Jesus promise them?
- How did Jesus leave them?
- What happened when the disciples were gathered together?
- What amazed the crowd?
- What did Peter do?
- What was the response?
- What did this new community look like?
- What happened through this new community?

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 do you think you would have reacted if you heard the roaring windstorm and the followers speaking in different languages?
- How would you describe the followers of Jesus in this story?
- How do you think the arrival of God's Spirit changed them?
- How would you describe the new community that the followers of Jesus formed?

- Describe God’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit) from the story. Say the first words that come to mind.
- 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) THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus was clear that our source of power to share His life-saving message is the Holy Spirit. Indeed, His followers experienced this when the Spirit came on them; likewise, Peter was filled with the Spirit and proclaimed the message with boldness. How have you experienced the Holy Spirit filling you, moving you, and giving you strength to share the message and love of Jesus?

2) A NEW COMMUNITY

With Jesus’ departure and the arrival of the Holy Spirit, a new community is formed. The “*Ekklesia*” or the church, became a different type of community. Read Acts 2:42-47 together. In what ways does the “modern church” still look like the “first church”? In what ways has it changed? What is good about the differences? What ancient roots should we rediscover today?

3) TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Jesus told his followers that their ministry would occur in four distinct locations (Acts 1:8). How do you see God using you, your church, and the church worldwide in the following places?

- Jerusalem = your home / neighborhood
- Judea = your hometown / surrounding community & region
- Samaria = the tough places people like to avoid
- Ends of the Earth = the nation & the world

Pray

God,

We are so excited and honored to be a part of a community of faith that has been gathering for thousands of years and experienced such amazing things as a result of your Holy Spirit. Thank you for giving this same Spirit to each and every one of us to be with us through even the toughest times. May we continue to grow as a community of your followers and figure out what it means to be a blessing to all people in your name. Amen.