



ICEBREAKER

Have you ever remodeled a room in your house or restored something like a car or collectible? Share a little about the project and what it felt like seeing the finished results. (5-10 min)



RECAP

Have someone in your Life Group give a brief overview of the events from the previous stories. (2-3 min)



INTRODUCTION

Have someone in your Life Group read Acts 2:42-47 and Revelation 21:1-8 out loud.



THE STORY OF THE CHURCH

A narrative based on John 20, Matthew 28, John 14, Luke 24, Acts 2, 4, 9:31; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 16; and 2 Corinthians 8. (10 min)

After His death and resurrection, Jesus gathered His followers back together. He began to show them from their history and sacred writings that what had happened to Him was all according to plan. God was still on a redemptive mission, and He was sending them out to announce His reign to the world.

Over the next forty days, Jesus showed them that His death and resurrection were needed to:

- Take the penalty for their sin on Himself.
- Defeat Satan.
- Redeem them from their slavery to sin.
- Secure the renewal of His creation.

Jesus' friends couldn't have been more excited. They were sitting in Jerusalem with Jesus, the one, true resurrected King. He was teaching them. He was about to take His throne and usher in the end of history. Finally, what they had been waiting, hoping, and longing for was here!

But not so fast. Jesus told Peter, John, and the others that the story wasn't finished. There were more people who needed to hear the good news about the victorious King and His good Kingdom. It was not yet time for His Kingdom to fully come. Jesus' disciples learned that they and their friends were going to be sent out into the world as ambassadors.

Just as the angels had heralded the good news of Jesus' birth so many years before, just as Jesus had heralded the news and showed people what life is like in His Kingdom, they too were going to be sent out to herald the good news of the true King's life, death, and resurrection. Together, their lives and their voices would be a taste of and an invitation into Kingdom life.



THE STORY OF THE CHURCH (CONT.)

Before He ascended, Jesus told His disciples, “I am leaving you now, but I will come again one day. After I leave, I will send the Spirit of God to live in and among you as you wait. The Spirit will empower you for the mission I have given you, to bring the good news of my Kingdom to every nation, making new disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Then He left, ascending to the right hand of the Father.

Jesus' followers (about 120 of them) sat in Jerusalem, waiting for the promised Spirit to empower them to live out the mission Jesus had given them. They waited and prayed as days went by. Finally, on the tenth day, the Spirit arrived with a great rush of wind, and tongues of fire were seen resting above their heads. Jesus' followers were united, equipped, and directed to begin fulfilling the mission Jesus had sent them to carry out. They were even empowered to speak in languages they had never spoken before so that everyone could hear the good news.

At this time, many people came into town because it was the time of Pentecost, a Jewish feast that drew people to Jerusalem from all over to celebrate the end of the spring harvest and God's provision. When those people heard the great sound of the wind, they came rushing to see what was going on.

Peter and his friends, empowered by the Holy Spirit, started to connect the dots for people, showing how their longings for a Deliverer, a true and perfect King, were fulfilled in Jesus, the One whom they had killed. He was truly the Messiah, the Deliverer, and they needed to repent and believe in this good news. Thousands of people, moved by the Holy Spirit, believed the good news of Jesus that day.



THE STORY OF THE CHURCH (CONT.)

As time went on, Jesus' disciples were sent out from Jerusalem. They spread all over the known world. They told as many people as they could about the one, true King and what He had done. They set up communities of people who believed and lived according to this true story wherever they went. These communities were called churches, and those who followed Jesus were called Christians.

Jesus' followers began to orient their lives around Jesus' teaching, devoting themselves to serving each other. They were a family that wasn't defined by cultural norms or racial lines, but by their crucified and risen Savior. Together, they learned from the Scriptures, living as missionaries to the world.

Many of those who followed Jesus were exiled, tortured, and even murdered for believing Jesus was the Messiah and living according to His teachings. Still, the good news of a risen Savior spread, bringing freedom and forgiveness to people across the world. As the good news spread through the cities and out into rural communities, people of all walks of life began to see the truth of the story.

One such man, named Saul, was a religious leader whose mission was to kill followers of Jesus. Saul encountered the risen Christ, and his life was transformed by the power of the Gospel to the point that he became one of the main missionaries we still learn from today (you might know him by his new name, Paul).

As churches spread across the world, a few of Jesus' followers (those who had witnessed the risen Christ) were directed by the Holy Spirit to write letters to these communities, teaching them how to live faithfully on mission. They answered questions, corrected errors, and redirected churches back to Jesus and His mission, which was now theirs to carry out by the power of the Spirit.



THE STORY OF THE CHURCH (CONT.)

Through the global Church, the bride of Christ, we see that God is still on His redemptive mission. As the Church lives out her mission to declare and demonstrate the Gospel, people continue to learn what it means to live under the good reign of God and worship King Jesus.

This is the part of the story in which we find ourselves today.



RETELLING THE STORY *Based on the above reading. (5-7 minutes)*

Retell the story of the Church as a Life Group, asking everyone to participate. See if you can summarize the events in order. Be sure to keep your participants on task to retell the story without leaning on previous knowledge of the narrative or getting ahead in the story.



DISCUSSION *Reflecting on the story. (10 minutes)*

- What is the Church? What is the mission of the Church? (see Acts 2:37-47)
- How does the Church give the world a “taste of the Kingdom”?
- What role did the Holy Spirit play in the early Church? What role does He play in the Church today?
- How do we find our place in this act of the story?



THE STORY OF RESTORATION

A narrative based on Luke 17; Acts 3; 1 Corinthians 15; and Revelation 21:1–8, 22:1–7. (10 minutes)

The story isn't over. One of Jesus' followers, a man named John, was imprisoned on a small island. He sat in his prison cell and prayed to God. He wondered if and when God would rescue His people.

God spoke to him through a dream and gave him a revelation. In a sequence of stories with rich imagery, God made John aware that God was still sovereignly accomplishing His mission on the earth through the Church. Even though God's people were suffering and it seemed like the enemy was winning, all was not lost. God revealed to John that He was actively accomplishing His purposes, and that they would ultimately culminate in a full and final victory.

One day, Jesus will return—not just as the sacrificial lamb that was slain, but as the conquering Lion. John paints this descriptive picture for us with rich imagery: Jesus will return on a great white warhorse like a mighty general returning from battle. He has a great sword of righteousness coming out of His mouth. He has “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” written on His thigh. He is wearing a crown of many jewels, and He is wearing a brilliant white robe. The hem of His robe has been drenched in blood.

Jesus will return for one final battle, where He will finally defeat Satan and the powers of darkness completely, sending them into a lake of fire where they will remain forever.

Then Jesus will judge every person. Those who decided to choose death, who rebelled against God's rule and never repented, will be cast away, forever missing out on God's renewed creation that is to come. Those who had been redeemed by the blood of Jesus will spend forever with Him.



THE STORY OF RESTORATION (CONT.)

John saw a picture of creation restored! He saw every bad and evil thing in the world come undone:

- All the effects of the curse, reversed.
- The twisting of God's original intention, untwisted.
- All tears wiped away.
- Mourning, crying, pain, and death, no more.
- All false idols, false gods, false saviors—thrown away to worship the true Savior.

John saw a picture of eternity:

- There was no vague otherworldliness.
- There was a King.
- There was a renewed creation.
- There were people from every tribe, tongue, and nation bowing down and worshiping King Jesus.

Not only did John see this—he heard it. A mighty voice declared from the throne, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them as their God. Behold, I am making all things new!”

Seeing and hearing all these things, John was again convinced that God was still on His mission. He knew that Jesus was using His Church to accomplish His purposes in the world. Nothing could thwart that. John wrote down what he'd seen and heard so that the rest of the Church could have the same hope, security, and urgency that he now had. He ended his writing with these final words: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”



RETELLING THE STORY *Based on the above reading. (5–7 minutes)*

Retell the restoration story as a Life Group, asking everyone to participate.

See if you can summarize the events in order. Be sure to keep your participants on task to retell the story without leaning on previous knowledge of the narrative.



DISCUSSION *Reflecting on the story. (10 minutes)*

- What excites you about the end of the story?
- What do you learn about God in this story?
- Is God's mission worth living for? Is it worth dying for?

ENGAGING IN THE MISSION OF GOD

1

Think about the early Church and some of the ways they oriented their lives to Jesus' teaching—living generously, serving one another, caring for the weak, loving the outcast, forgiving each other, sharing their resources. Select one area to focus on this week and invite the Holy Spirit to help you live more like Jesus in your everyday life.

2

Identify an area in your life that feels hopeless, like the story is over. Spend a few quiet moments reflecting on God's faithfulness and His ongoing work to restore all things. In prayer, surrender your hopelessness to Him and receive the hope that is found in Christ. Consider utilizing a prayer journal, listing the ways God has been faithful to you in the past as a reminder of His ability to be faithful in this area.

3

Come up with your own idea! Join the mission of the Church in a way that's challenging/stretching for you.