



The Story of God | The Church

The Church | Story

Story from... Matthew 28; John 14, 20; Acts 1-2; 1 Corinthians 15

In the weeks that followed Jesus' death, he appeared to his disciples many times and was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. Quickly, the news about his resurrection spread throughout the land.

One of Jesus' disciples named Thomas said, *"I won't believe he is alive unless I can put my fingers into the holes where his hands were nailed to the cross."*

A few days later, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said to Thomas, *"Put your fingers here—feel the hole in my hand. Put your hand into the wound on my side."*

Thomas shouted, *"It is you, Jesus—my God!"*

Then Jesus said, *"I will bless those even more who haven't seen, but still believe!"*

Soon after that, Jesus met with his disciples over a meal. He said, *"John baptized you in water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with God's Spirit. This will give you power to live in my ways and tell the entire world about me."*

Jesus commanded them, *"Go! Make disciples all over the world. Teach them to walk in my ways and obey me. I am leaving now to be with my father in heaven, but you will never be alone. God's Spirit will come and live inside of you—giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth."*

As the disciples watched, Jesus went up into the sky, disappearing in the clouds right in front of them!

A few weeks later, a group of 120 of Jesus' followers gathered to pray together in Jerusalem. All of sudden, they heard a loud sound—like a roaring windstorm—that filled the house where they were meeting. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and started speaking in languages that were not their own! They went out into the street and began to tell people about the great things that Jesus had done.

At that time, Jews from all over the world were living in Jerusalem. This roaring sound was heard throughout the entire city, and a large crowd had gathered outside the house to see what was going on.

When the people heard Jesus' followers speaking, they said, *"How can this be? They're from Galilee, but they're speaking in our own languages. This is amazing!"*

One of Jesus' disciples, named Peter, stepped forward to explain to the crowds what was happening. He said, *"This is part of God's prophecy being fulfilled. We are eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah!"*

Then Peter explained how Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets said about the Messiah. He told the crowd, *"Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God. In Jesus, you will find forgiveness— he is the final sacrifice for everyone's sin. This is God's new covenant offered not just to the Jews, but to all who want to be part of God's family."*

That day, thousands believed what Peter had said and turned from their sins to follow Jesus. They found forgiveness in Jesus - realizing that he exchanged his life for theirs, as the final sacrifice for all of man's sins. His blood became their covering. They were baptized and became a part of God's family—once again empowered to live out God's promise to be a blessing to all people.

God's new covenant was not written on tablets of stone like before, but on the hearts and minds of his people, so they would always know how to live in his ways.

These followers of Jesus were deeply committed to God and each other... sharing everything they had, praying, learning God's ways together, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity. Daily, they ate together to honor and remember Jesus' life given for them.

They saw God do amazing things through them—miracles and healings—as he added people to their group each day.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, because of Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—as they follow in the ways of God.

*We can join this great story... the story can continue with us!
I've told you a lot so far. Let me ask a few questions...*

The Church | Dialogue

Remember this is a dialog, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

Do you have a desire to join in this amazing story?

To live life in the ways of God, to accept Jesus as your sacrifice?

To be blessed and be a blessing to others?

God is offering you the best possible way to live.

Will you choose his ways or your own?

If so...

What was Jesus’ command right before leaving his disciples?

Is this command also for us today?

What is a disciple? How do you make a disciple?

What did he say about God’s Spirit?

God’s Spirit will come and live inside of you - giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth. Think about all of the stories that we have heard together...

What have you learned from these stories? What amazes you?

What common themes run through all of the stories?

God wants us to live closely with him—listening and obeying.

He provides the best possible way of life for us to live.

God desires to rescue his creation and bring them back to himself.

He will go to amazing lengths to accomplish this.

Our sins require sacrifice—a life for a life.

How do all of these stories connect as one big story?

If you had to tell the entire story... the whole story... what would you tell us?

Is there a story that stands out, or is more important than the others?

What have we learned about what God is like? Where have we seen that? (Make a list)

He does what is good, right, and perfect—he is holy.

He is powerful, creative, knows all things, and has control over the elements.

Punishes rebellion

Keeps his promises

Does not allow evil (sin) to remain with him

Provides a way of forgiveness

Loves his creation

Provides us with the best way to live

Wants to protect us and bless us

Wants us to continue his blessings, and much more!

How does this story continue (with us)?

The Church | Additional Dialogue

After hearing this story, how is it changing your life? How will you live differently?

Where does your story fit into this entire Story of God?

If you were to draw a symbol (an icon) for your life story, what would it look like?

What does it mean for you to live in God's ways right now?

Epilogue | Creation Restored

STORY FROM... Luke 17 Acts 3 1 Corinthians 15 Revelation 21

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, *“When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It'll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!”*

Jesus will return to destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. There will be no more sickness, pain, or death— He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. The world as we know it will be gone forever.

God will once again live with his people and enjoy a close relationship. Humans will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. God's Kingdom will come in fullness, and everything will live under his rule.

As God's community on earth, we wait with great anticipation for this amazing day. *Until then, may we live in God's ways, giving people a glimpse of what life is like in the coming Kingdom.*