



SESSION THIRTY-TWO:

signs & wonders

SESSION OVERVIEW

SUPPLIES

- ▶ **Echo the Story DVD/video** for this session
- ▶ **Echo the Story Sketch Journals** for every participant
- ▶ Markers, pens, and colored pencils

① **rewind** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

The Story So Far video begins with a two-minute interaction for your group. Following this interaction, the video will show a fast-paced, animated review of the previous session's story.

② **prepare** FOR THE STORY [10 MINUTES]

Participants will draw their own version of this session's story symbol in their Sketch Journals. Then, a participant will read a section from the Sketch Journal that helps ready the group for imaginative listening.

③ **imagine** THE STORY [5 MINUTES]

The leader will now tell this session's Bible story. A carefully crafted narrative script of the story is provided in this Leader Guide.

④ **capture** WHAT YOU NOTICE [5 MINUTES]

The leader will ask someone of a different gender to do a second telling of the story. During this telling, participants will use their Sketch Journals to capture aspects of the story that stand out to them.

⑤ **remix** THE STORY *TIME PERMITTING [10 MINUTES]

Participants will be invited to choose from two REMIX activities (included in the Sketch Journal) that guide them to retell part of the Bible story in their own unique way.

⑥ **connect** TO YOUR STORY [20 MINUTES]

Finally, the leader will guide a group dialogue where participants are asked to share their observations and insights from the story. Dialogue questions are provided in this Leader Guide.

THE STORY SO FAR VIDEO

Leader Says:

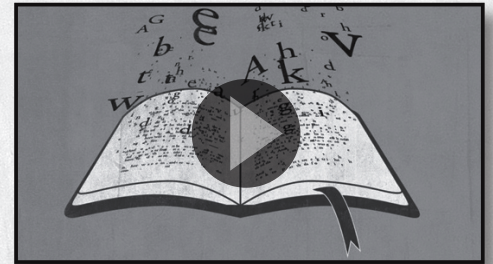
Right now we're going to continue our journey through the Bible.

We're going to start with a short video. The first two minutes give you a chance to answer a question with a partner.

After the timer finishes, the next part of the video will start right away, reviewing the story from our last session. So find a partner and get ready, because this video moves really fast. You'll have to pay attention and listen carefully. *Are you ready?*

► CUE: Play The Story So Far video for this session.

Even though this is written like a script, please personalize the "Leader Says" parts. You'll be more effective if you're not just reading directly from the page!



prepare FOR THE STORY

DRAW THE STORY SYMBOL

- ▶ CUE: If you collected the Sketch Journals last session, pass them out to each participant. Remember to give Sketch Journals to any new people joining your group. Provide pens, markers, and colored pencils for participants to use.

Leader Says:

Our Sketch Journals are an important part of our Echo experience. They'll give us space to express our creativity, explore our questions, and capture the thoughts and ideas that these stories spark in us.

Each story will have its own **symbol** as a visual reminder of what happens in the story. Right now, turn to **page 24** and *draw your own version* of the symbol for the next story: SIGNS & WONDERS (open prison door) in your Sketch Journal.

You may be wondering why we are redrawing this symbol when it's printed on the next page. When we each create our *own* version of this story's symbol it helps embed this image in our minds and helps get our **creativity flowing** for the rest of the activities we'll do later.

The goal isn't to copy the symbol—*be creative and make it your own!*

- ▶ CUE: Don't spend a lot of time on this activity—*two minutes or less.*

THE BIBLE IS LIKE . . .

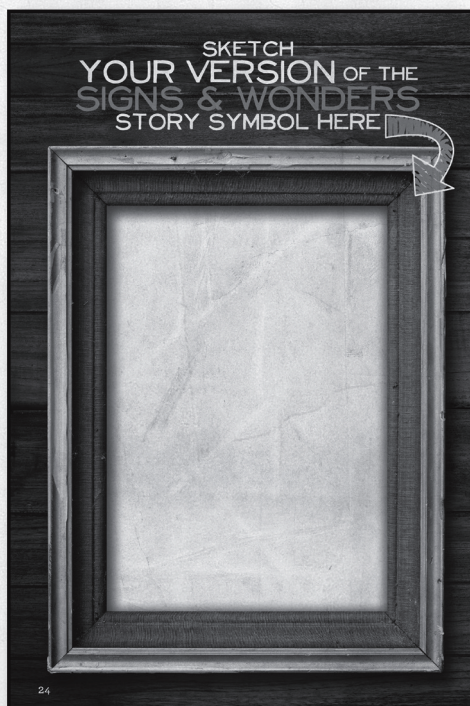
Leader Says:

Each session of Echo will invite us to experience a story from the Bible. But before we dive into each story, we'll slow down and take time to *prepare ourselves*. To help us do this, we'll compare the Bible to a different image or object.

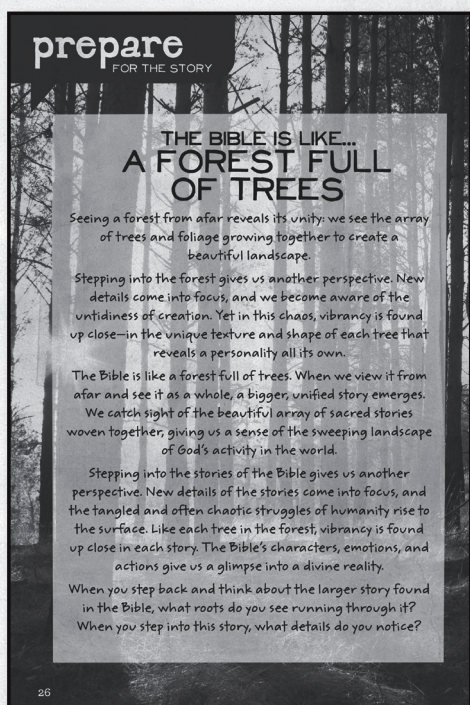
The image for this session is **a forest full of trees**.

Let's hear more about this from **page 26** of your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ CUE: Ask for a volunteer from your group to read page 26 of their Sketch Journal.



Encourage participants to draw their own version of the story symbol, regardless of their artistic ability. The goal is not to create an exact replica but to capture your own interpretation.



ABOUT THIS STORY [read silently]

Leader Says:

Take a moment **in silence** to look at the **ABOUT THIS STORY** section on **page 27** in your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ **CUE:** After twenty seconds of silent reading, move to the next section. (You don't need to discuss the "Think About" question.)

IMAGINATIVE LISTENING

Leader Says:

Imaginative listening allows you to step into a story. But rather than entering it alone, we share this space together with our minds open to what God has to say to us.

Let's slow down and prepare ourselves for the next story. Push out any distractions and use your imagination to enter the story, seeing it come to life in your mind.

You might want to close your eyes or focus on the image on **pages 28–29**. After we hear the story read once, you'll have a chance to capture what you noticed in your Sketch Journal.

Are you ready?


Take a moment of silence. Sit up straight in your chair. Take a deep breath, slow down, and clear your mind. Whisper a prayer asking God to show you something meaningful from this story.

- ▶ **CUE:** After about fifteen seconds of quiet, begin narrating the story.

ABOUT THIS STORY

[read silently]

The word *apostle* is a Greek word that means "messenger" or "one who is sent." The title is used to designate leaders in the early church who are ambassadors for the work of God, empowered by God to show and tell what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The apostles focused specifically on prayer and teaching the Hebrew scriptures, delegating tasks of service and administration to other faithful followers called *deacons*, a Greek word that means "servant" or "administrator." While many of the apostles in the book of Acts had been previously known as "disciples," this new title indicates the change in their role from follower to leader, from student to teacher.

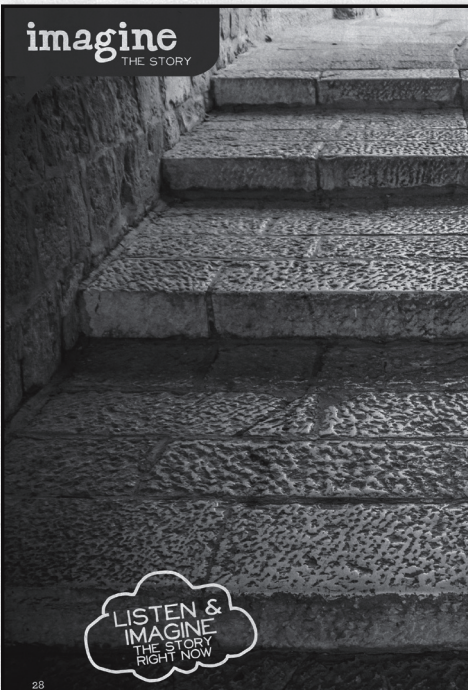


THINK ABOUT:
Who do you know that could be called an apostle today?
Who could be called a deacon today?

signs & wonders 27

imagine

THE STORY



LISTEN & IMAGINE THE STORY RIGHT NOW

28

imagine THE STORY

Don't just read this story;
bring it to life with
your voice!

Leader Narrates:

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 Peter and John. 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 Peter and John answered them, *"Whom should we listen to—you or God? We can't stop from sharing about what we've seen and heard!"*

Tell the story from beginning to end— don't stop!

You'll cause confusion by stopping to answer a question, teach, clarify, give application, or make an observation in the middle of the story.

The leaders threatened to further punish Peter and John but feared that it would cause a riot. So the next morning, Peter and John were released from prison.

When Peter and John told the other believers what 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 and boldly shared 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 of 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. Then the high priest shouted at them, *"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."*

imagine THE STORY

Peter's words enraged the leaders so much 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.

Then Gamaliel 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 it 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 in 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 publicly declare that Jesus was the true Messiah.

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Leader Says:

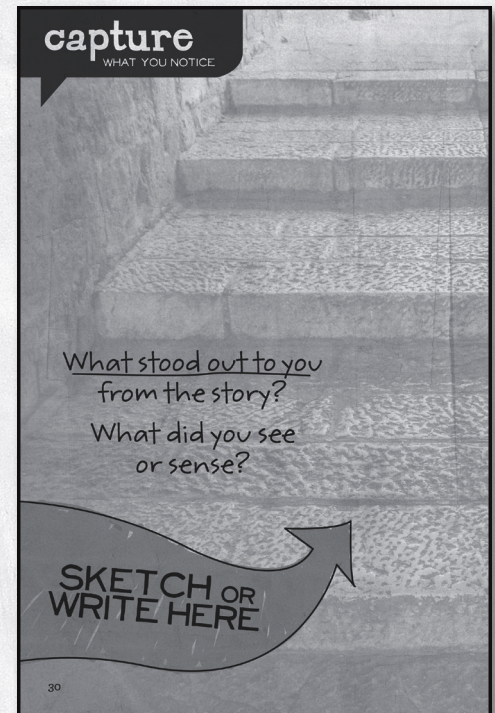
Take a moment to close your eyes and let the story replay in your mind. Pay attention to what stands out to you from the story.

- ▶ CUE: After fifteen to twenty seconds, transition to the second reading.

SECOND TELLING & CAPTURING

We're going to listen to the story one more time, but this time with **a different voice telling it**. During this telling of the story turn to **pages 30–31** and write or draw the words or images that come to mind. Use these pages to capture anything that you notice—even if it seems like a small detail. You will be surprised—even small things that you notice will spark thoughts and insights from our group.

- ▶ CUE: For this second telling, use a storyteller of a **different gender** from the person who read the first time. *Different voices help people to listen with fresh ears.*



remix THE STORY

[*TIME PERMITTING]

REMIX ACTIVITIES

Leader Says:

Now that we've heard the story twice and begun to capture what we noticed, let's REMIX the story. There are two REMIX activities, designed to help you retell part of the story in your own unique way.

There is a **drawing activity** on pages 32–33 and a **creative writing activity** on pages 34–35.

These are not fill-in-the-blank activities! These activities are designed to help you express yourself and share what you see in the story.

Or if you'd prefer, you may instead **continue to develop** your thoughts and drawings from the CAPTURE pages you just worked on.

Whatever you choose, take the next ten minutes to **use your imagination** to create your REMIX and then we will share them with each other. Invest yourself honestly in this, and you will be surprised at your insight and creativity.

► **CUE:** After ten minutes (or less if your group finishes sooner), go to the next section.


Work at being fully present, attentively listening and making eye contact.

remix
THE STORY

From the next few pages, choose a REMIX activity—either DRAWING or creative WRITING—and start REMIXing!

DRAWING: IMAGES OF THE EARLY CHURCH

- 1 Draw a picture that captures each of the three scenes from today's story.
- 2 Use your imagination and creativity to capture the details of each image.



The Apostles Heal a Beggar

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remix
THE STORY

CREATIVE WRITING: PRAYERS FOR BOLDNESS

- 1 Read about the early church members who prayed for boldness in Acts 4:23–31.
- 2 Write a prayer in your own words that you think the believers in the early church might have prayed.

ACTS 4:23–31

After [Peter and John] were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard it, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant:

"Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah."

For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

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TURN & SHARE

Leader Says:

Now, turn to someone near you and share your CAPTURE or REMIX with them. Remember to respect one another's ideas and encourage one another.

- ▶ CUE: After two minutes, begin the dialogue.

GROUP DIALOGUE

Leader Says:

Now we'll share as a group. This time is about sharing observations and **seeing the story through one another's eyes**.

Remember, when someone else shares something that connects with you, write it down on **page 36** of your Sketch Journal.

- + So what stood out to you from this story?
- + What did this story make you wonder about?

LEADER: Don't give answers to participants' wonderings and questions. In fact, share an example of what you are wondering about the story.

- + Who'd like to share something you've written or drawn from the CAPTURE or REMIX sections?

Leader Says:

I have a few more questions to ask you about the story. Remember, I am not looking for "correct" answers; this time is about you sharing your observations. **I want to see the story through your eyes.** Ready?

- + 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.

DIALOGUE PREP

1. There are probably more questions here than you'll have time to ask. Pick a few questions ahead of time that you want to make sure to ask.
2. Questions in gray and marked with a dash are for follow-up. Ask them as time allows and as they are needed.



connect TO YOUR STORY

Find key moments to encourage quiet people to share. Say something like, "I'd love to hear from some of you who haven't shared yet."

- + Why do you think some of the religious leaders were filled with jealousy, outrage, and anger towards the apostles?
 - Did you think they have good reasons to feel this way?

In the first scene, Peter and John heal a beggar outside the temple.

- + If you were Peter or John, what do you think you would have said to the beggar?
- + What do you think was controversial or offensive about what Peter and John were teaching?

The second scene focuses on Peter and John being captured by religious leaders.

- + Why do you think the religious leaders told Peter and John to stop teaching and healing in Jesus' name?
 - What do you think Peter and John were feeling as they stood before the religious leaders?
- + Why do you think the other believers began to pray and ask God for boldness and courage?

In the third scene, an angel freed the apostles from prison, and right away they started teaching in temple again.

- + What would you have done after being freed from prison?
- + Do you think the apostles knew they would be punished again?
 - What gave the apostles their boldness?
- + What was Gamaliel's advice to the other religious leaders?
 - What do you think about this advice?
 - Why do you think they listened to him?

- + What would it have been like to be a part of the church in this story? Say the first thing that comes to mind.

Before answering this next question, take the next ten seconds and think about your response:

- + What do you think this story shows us about God?

FINAL QUESTION

Take a quiet moment to think about this final question:

- + What does this story say about us? About you?

Write a quick response on **page 37** in your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ **CUE:** After twenty to thirty seconds of quiet, ask a few participants to share. Encourage participants to personalize their ideas using “I” and “me” instead of “you” and “we” to keep them from being overly general or preachy.

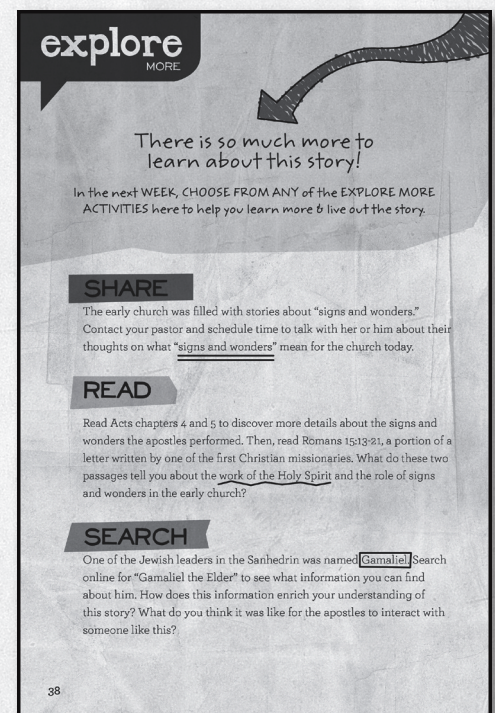
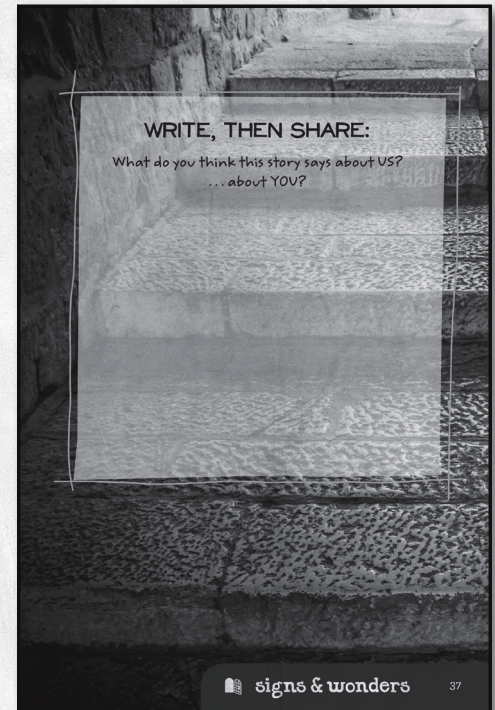
Leader Says:

This was a really meaningful time. *Thank you!* You did a great job. I’m looking forward to gathering together again so we can experience the next story.

If you’d like to learn more about this story, there’s a section called EXPLORE MORE on **pages 38–39** of your Sketch Journal.

You are welcome to take your Sketch Journal with you and try some of these activities, but be sure to bring it back for the next story. If you’re worried about forgetting it, you can leave your Sketch Journal with me.

- ▶ **CUE:** To close this session, ask someone to lead the group in prayer.



OPTIONAL QUESTIONS TO GO DEEPER:

- + What do you think it meant for the first believers to be filled with boldness? What does it mean for you to be filled with boldness?
- + This story is filled with signs and wonders. Do you think God still performs signs and wonders like this in our world today? Why or why not?
- + What did you notice about God's Spirit in this story?
- + What experience in your life can you not help but share?