



SESSION THIRTY-ONE:

the church

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 [10 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 Bible's story from the beginning up to the next story we will hear.

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:

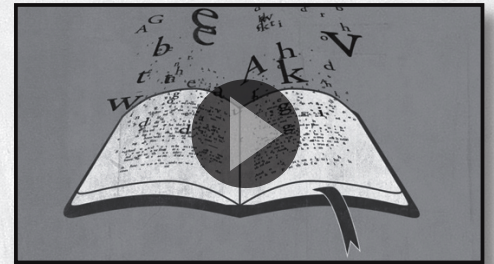
Right now we're going to continue our journey through the Bible.

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

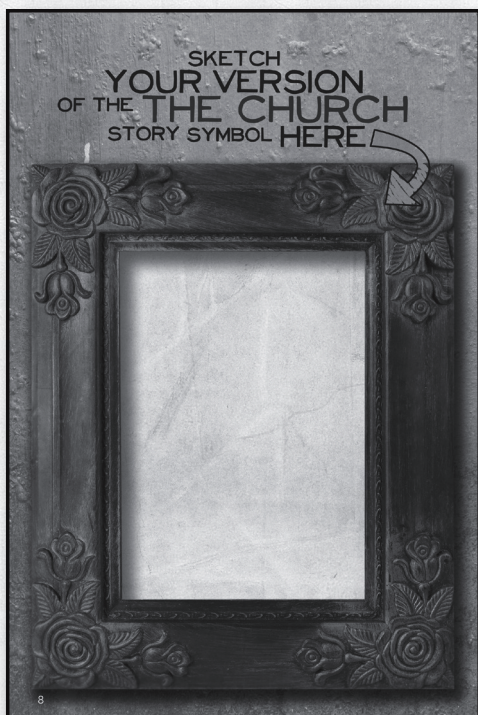
After the timer finishes, the next part of the video will start right away. **This will give us a quick review of the Bible's story from the beginning up to the next story we are about to hear.** So find a partner and get ready, because this video moves really fast. You'll have to pay attention and listen carefully. *Are you ready?*

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

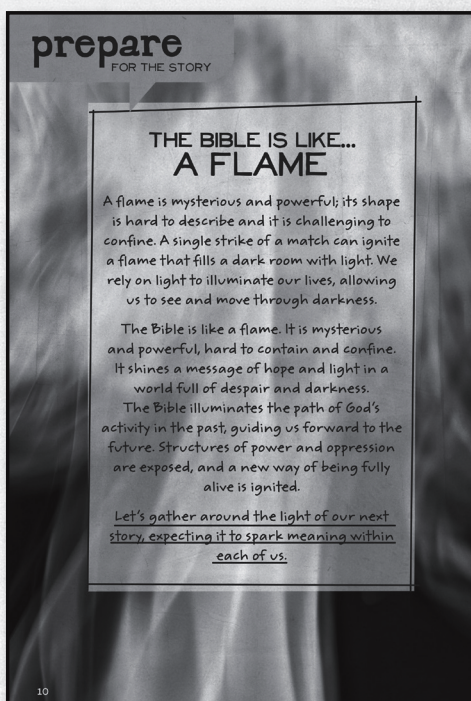
Even though this is written like a script, please personalize the "Leader Says" parts. You'll be more effective if you're not just reading directly from the page!



The video you will play for Session 31 recaps Echo the Story: Youth 36, Sessions 1-30.



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.



prepare FOR THE STORY

DRAW THE STORY SYMBOL

- ▶ CUE: Pass out Sketch Journals and ask each participant to write his or her name on the **back cover**. 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 8** and *draw your own version* of the symbol for the next story: THE CHURCH (two faces) 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 embeds 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 first object is **a flame**.

Let's hear more about this from **page 10** of your Sketch Journal.

- ▶ CUE: Ask for a volunteer from your group to read page 10 of their Sketch Journal.

ABOUT THIS STORY [read silently]

Leader Says:

Take a moment **in silence** to look at the **ABOUT THIS STORY** section on **page 11** 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:

Listening with your ears is just the first step in imaginative listening. You must also listen with your mind, allowing God to fan the flame of your imagination, igniting a spark of creativity as the story comes to life.

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.

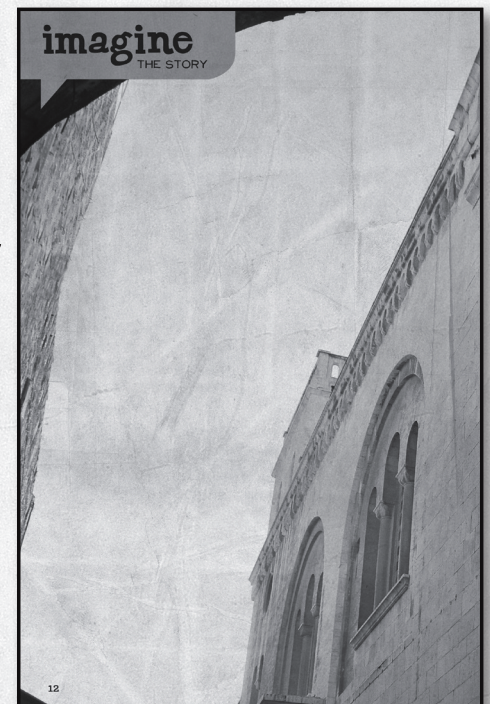
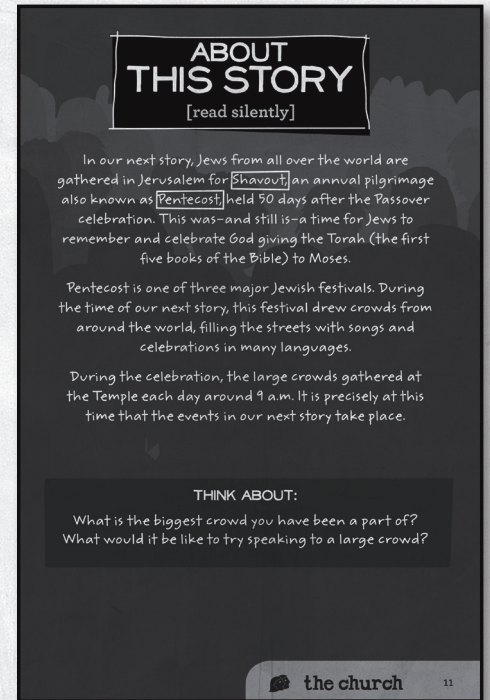
You might want to close your eyes or focus on the image on **pages 12–13**. After we hear the story read once, you'll have a chance to capture what you noticed in your Sketch Journal.

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.

To create a sense of reverence for the telling of the Bible story, you may want to have someone from your group light a candle.



imagine THE STORY

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

Leader Narrates:

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!

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.

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, and to the ends of the earth."*

Immediately after Jesus said this, he was taken up in a cloud as 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 120 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.

**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.

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!"*

SCENE THREE: PETER EXPLAINS

One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, 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 come 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, thousands chose to follow Jesus as Messiah and 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 FOUR: 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.

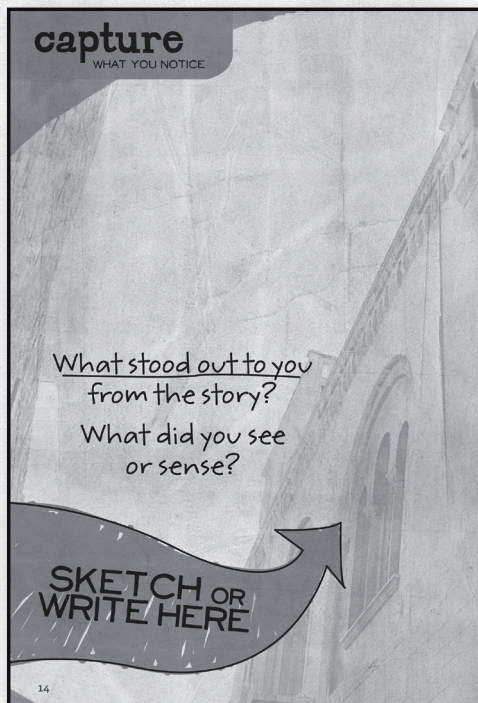
Twelve of Jesus' disciples became known as apostles and led the church, teaching people how to follow in the ways of Jesus.

Everyone saw God do amazing things through the church—miracles and healing—and more and more people joined the church each day.



capture

WHAT YOU NOTICE



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 14–15** 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 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 16–17 and a **creative writing activity** on pages 18–19.

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.

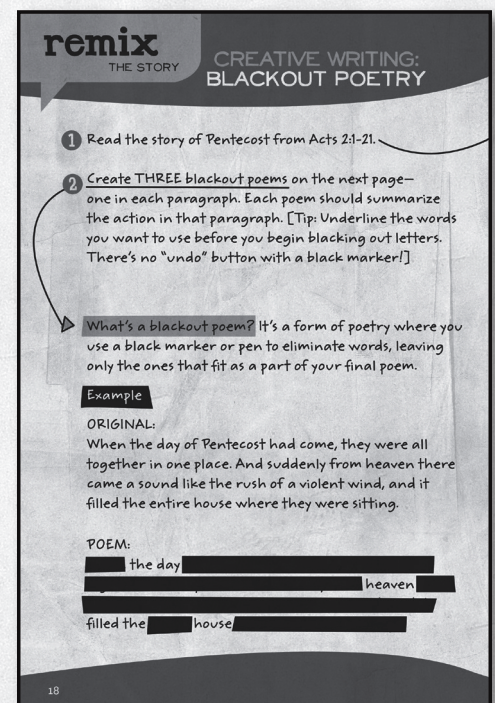
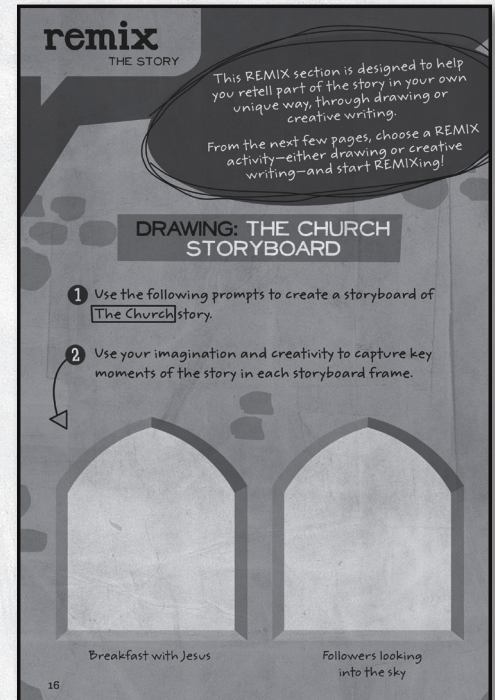
Or if you'd prefer, you may instead **continue to develop** your thoughts and drawings from the CAPTURE pages you just worked on.

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.

Try Out REMIX Activities Beforehand

Read through (and try) the REMIX activities before the session. This will help you give a clear explanation of the activities and be better equipped to answer questions.



connect TO YOUR STORY

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.

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 about two minutes, begin the dialogue.

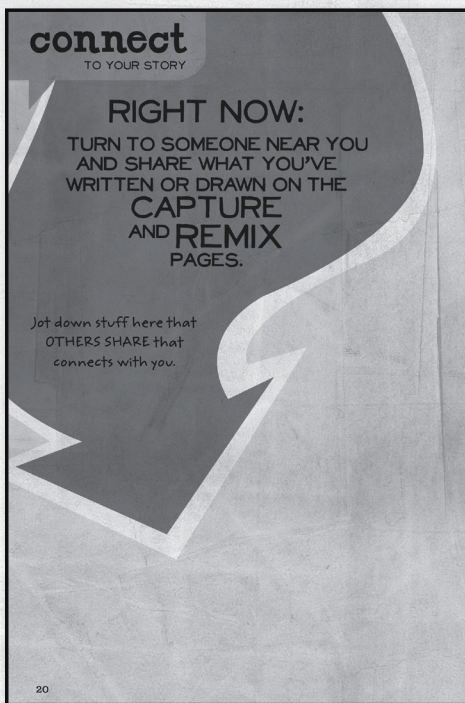
GROUP DIALOGUE

Leader Says:

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

Look at **page 20** of your Sketch Journal for a moment. This is an important page. This where you can make note of things that others share that connect with you. A big part of this experience is listening and learning from one another. I am certain I will learn a lot from you.

- + So what stood out to you from this story?
- + What did this story make you wonder about?
- ▶ CUE: 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. 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 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?
 - What did they spend time doing together? (If helpful, read Acts 2:42-47 together.)
 - What would it have been like to be a part of this community?
- + Describe God’s Spirit (the Holy Spirit) from this story. Say the first words 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:

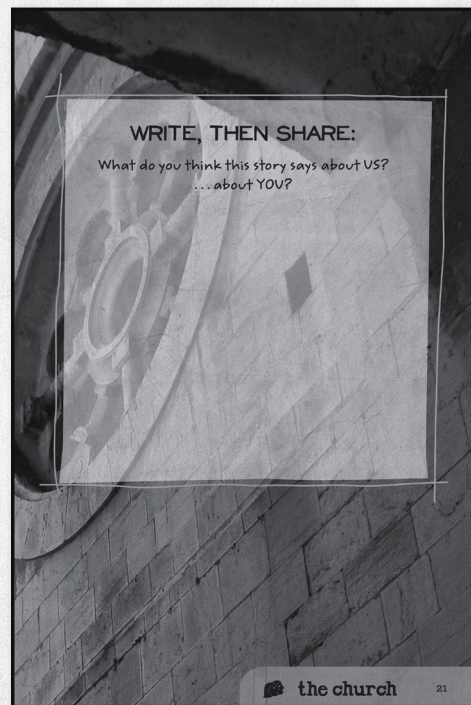
- + What does this story say about us? About you?

Write a quick response on **page 21** 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” language to avoid sounding overly general or preachy.

Allow for Silence

This approach to the Bible will be new for many people. For the first few sessions, your group may be hesitant to share as they try to orient themselves. Don’t worry! Allow quiet time for participants to reflect on the story without trying to provide answers. After a few sessions, you will see people begin to open up much more.



connect TO YOUR STORY

explore
MORE

There is so much more to learn about this story!

In the next week, CHOOSE FROM ANY of the EXPLORE MORE ACTIVITIES here to help you learn more & live out the story.

SHARE

If you haven't already, go back and complete the Blackout Poetry REMIX activity. Take a picture of your final product and share it online or email it to your friends and family. How do you think people will respond to what you share?

READ

The longer title of the fifth book of the New Testament is The Acts of the Apostles or The Acts of the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 1-2 and pay special attention how the Holy Spirit empowers the apostles to lead the church. Then read John 20:19-31. Where do you see the Spirit of God in this passage? Capture questions and details you notice in your Sketch Journal.

SEARCH

The story of Pentecost in the New Testament features people who speak different languages making up one church. Go online and search for a church near you that speaks a different language than you typically speak. (For example search for "Spanish-speaking church," "Korean speaking church," etc.) What do you think it would be like to worship with them? (Why not visit them and find out?)

22

Leader Says:

This was a really meaningful time. *Thank you!* You did a great job. I'm looking forward to gathering together again so that 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 22–23** 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:

- + How do you think Jesus' followers were feeling as they watched Jesus ascend into the sky?
- + Just before his ascension, what did Jesus tell his followers to do?
- + How would you describe Peter in this story?
- + How does God's Spirit work in us today? Is it the same as the story in Acts 2 or different?
- + Should the new community from today's story be a model for our churches today? Why or why not?
- + What surprised you most from the story of the church?