

NEW BEGINNINGS

Bible Basis: Acts 1:2–11; 2:1–6, 23–24, 32–33, 42–47; 8:4–8; 9:1–9, 17–19

Key Verse: All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had not known. The Spirit gave them the ability to do this. —Acts 2:4 NIV

Bible Point: God gives his people the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can live inside me.

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 28: New Beginnings

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

As the children gather, have them stand in a large circle. If you have more than twenty in class, break into groups of no more than twenty. Have the group hold hands. Then ask children to knot themselves up. They can twist under arms, step over hands, cross to the other side of the circle—but they may not let go of each other's hands. Let them tangle themselves up for a few minutes, then stay in that position for the discussion.

- Tell me something great about being connected to other people.
- If I said you had to wait like this for a long time, how would you feel?

Say, **In the Bible story today, we'll hear about a group of people that weren't sure what they were tangled up with. Jesus told them to go to Jerusalem and wait. Let's find out what happened there.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 28*, poster board, marker, tape

Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 28. You can have children find Acts 1 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

A New Community

Ahead of time prepare three posters. Write one of these words on each poster: *cloud, fire, light*. If you're artistic, add drawings. Hang the signs on three different walls or on chairs in three separate parts of your teaching space. Start out with the group facing the cloud poster.

After Jesus died and came back to life, he appeared to his friends many times. Read Acts 1:4. The disciples wondered what Jesus was talking about. He said, "You will be my

witnesses from one end of the Earth to the other.” Jesus was giving his friends a big job to do—to tell everyone about him! The Holy Spirit was going to help them do the job.

Then it was time for Jesus to leave. He didn’t just disappear. He was taken up into heaven. His friends watched him rise off the ground until he was so high that a cloud hid him and they couldn’t see him anymore. Repeat after me:

Cloud, cloud, the crowd was wowed. Pause for children to repeat.

The people there kept looking at the sky. Suddenly, two men dressed in white clothing stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven.” Then the people came to their senses and went to Jerusalem to wait, just as Jesus had told them to do. *Have the group turn and face the fire poster.*

Read Acts 2:1–4.

Godly Jews from every country in the world were staying in Jerusalem. A crowd came together when they heard the sound of the believers speaking in all these languages. It was confusing, because everybody heard the words in their own language—all at the same time. The Holy Spirit was helping the believers tell the other people about Jesus. But some of the people thought the believers were just acting crazy. Peter, one of Jesus’ friends, stood up to tell the crowd all about Jesus.

Peter explained that God had planned long ago for Jesus to die on the cross and then be raised from the dead. And God had promised the Holy Spirit, and now the Holy Spirit had come. Many people started believing in Jesus because of what happened that day. Repeat after me:

Cloud, cloud, the crowd was wowed. Pause for children to repeat.

Fire, fire, the Spirit inspires. Pause for children to repeat.

Things got pretty exciting after that. Believers worshiped and prayed together. They shared meals together in their homes. They shared everything they had. They were a brand new community. However, the religious leaders who hated Jesus didn’t like his followers either. They tried to stop anyone else from believing in Jesus by scaring people or even killing them just for believing in Jesus. *Have the group turn and face the light poster.*

A man named Saul became very good at finding and hurting people who believed in Jesus. A lot of the believers went to other cities so they would be safe. But Saul looked for them everywhere. One day he was on his way to the city of Damascus to find Christians and cause trouble for them. He planned to take them prisoner and bring them back to Jerusalem.

Read Acts 9:3–6.

The men traveling with Saul stood there. They heard the sound, but they didn't see anyone. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes—but he couldn't see! His friends had to lead him by the hand into Damascus because he was blind.

God spoke to another man in Damascus. His name was Ananias. God sent Ananias to see Saul and heal his blindness. Ananias said to Saul, "You will be filled with the Holy Spirit." Right away something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. He could see again! After that, Saul started telling people about Jesus, and he changed his name to Paul to show he was a different person. Repeat after me:

Cloud, cloud, the crowd was wowed. *Pause for children to repeat.*

Fire, fire, the Spirit inspires. *Pause for children to repeat.*

Light, light, it was strangely bright. *Pause for children to repeat.*

After Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, he was taken up in a cloud. Then the Holy Spirit came to his friends in tongues of fire. And finally, Saul's life was changed by a bright light and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. God gave his people the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can live inside us, too, when we believe in Jesus the way the people in the story did.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 28*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you what the tongues of fire are. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- What gift did God give to his people?
- What happened to Saul on his way to Damascus?

Say, **The Holy Spirit was not just for Bible times. When we believe in Jesus the Holy Spirit lives in us, too.**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: PYRAMID TOSS

Stuff You Need: Pyramid Toss Activity Sheet, safety scissors, tape

Give an activity sheet to each child and have them assemble the pyramid. Say, **In our Bible story, we heard about a cloud, a dove, and a light. All these things showed that something new was happening—a new group of people was formed who believed in Jesus.** If necessary, review briefly the story connections of the three symbols: cloud—Jesus went to heaven; fire—the Holy Spirit came; light—Saul met Jesus on the way to Damascus. In small groups, have children take turns

tossing the pyramid. Have children pick it up and look at the bottom side it lands on, then tell one thing they remember about that portion of the Bible story. One side is “your choice” and children may choose any part of the story. Ask:

- Which part of the story would you like to have been part of?
- Tell about the new things that happened in this story.

Say, **God gave his people the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them do the new job of telling everyone about Jesus.**

OPTION 2: LIVING PICTURES

Stuff You Need: Bible

Optional: Bible-time clothes, props

Divide your class into three groups and give each group one part of the story—Jesus going to heaven, the Holy Spirit coming, and Saul meeting Jesus. The groups don't have to be the same size. The groups should talk about their part of the story and decide on one part to picture. When it's their turn, they should freeze in poses to show the scene. When everyone has shown their scene, talk about why they chose that part of the story to show. If you have a large class, each group can show multiple pictures.

OPTION 3: COME, HOLY SPIRIT

Stuff You Need: Come, Holy Spirit Activity Sheet, crayons

Give an activity sheet to each child. **The Holy Spirit is a gift from God. It is another way he shows he loves us. The Holy Spirit is with us. In the tongue of fire, write a way that the Holy Spirit shows he is with you.** Color and share.

OPTION 4: TONGUES OF FIRE HEADBAND

Stuff You Need: red, orange, and yellow tissue paper, construction paper, stapler

1. Preparation: Cut construction paper lengthwise into one-inch sections.
2. Staple ends together to form a circle. You might have to staple a few sections together to make the circle large enough to fit around the students' heads.
3. Tear the tissue paper into pieces.
4. Glue to the middle of the headband so the pieces look like a flame.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside us. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 28*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.