

PREPARATION

- Read Acts 2 twice.
- Bring party hats, streamers, noisemakers, balloons and anything else that would help you create a party environment. Decorate the room the way you would for a birthday party or similar celebration. Have small cups of crackers, Goldfish crackers or popcorn, enough for each child to have a little snack. Be mindful of children's allergies and avoid caffeine. The food is for a brief illustration in the lesson. (If you have a built-in snack time during club, you can forego giving them another snack.)
- During the next three weeks, the clubbers will hear the same six verses each lesson. Offer them team points or simple prizes as an incentive for memorizing these verses. On weeks two and three of the Great ShakeUP, clubbers will also hear about the acronym SALT to help them learn a method for inviting friends to club. Additionally, you may want to offer an incentive if they can tell you what each letter stands for by week four of the Great ShakeUP!

LESSON

Whenever there is something to celebrate, I love to invite my family over for a party. If it is my mom's birthday, I love to have my dad and brothers help me decorate the house. If my family moves to a new house or apartment, I like to have good friends and extended family over for dinner and games to help us enjoy the new place. Christmas, Fourth of July or Labor Day — all are good excuses for me to have family and friends over. Truth be told, I LOVE to celebrate.

If you are a Christian, did you know you have a reason to celebrate every single day? You do — you have a Savior whom you will meet face-to-face one day, and because of Him, you are saved from spiritual death and hell. Now that is something to celebrate, huh?

Tonight, and for the next two weeks, we will talk about why we are celebrating, why we should want to invite others to the party, and whom we should invite to the party. Then, three weeks from tonight, we will bring people to club who need to hear why we are celebrating.

Tonight I want to talk about how the very first Christians celebrated what they had learned about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior. Open your Bibles to Acts 2:42.

(Read the verse out loud once. Then read to verse 47. Finally read verse 42 again and tell your clubbers that you will be concentrating on verse 42 tonight.)

Now I want you to imagine you are wearing the sandals of the early Christians. If you want, you can close your eyes as I describe the days before and after Jesus Christ's life on earth, His death and resurrection.

Picture a few fishermen who are minding their own business, doing their job.



Suddenly, Jesus calls from the shore, “You there! Come and follow Me!” Because He is a rabbi, or teacher, they drop their nets and follow Him. Over the next few weeks Jesus calls additional men to follow Him, including more fishermen and a tax collector. The group grows to 12 people.

These 12 men got to know Jesus. He is God and the Son of God. He is a person. Up until then, no one had ever been able to see God face-to-face. While following Jesus around for nearly three years, the followers saw Jesus do all kinds of amazing things. He healed blind, lame and sick people, He raised people from the dead, and He had compassion for women and Samaritans (two groups of people usually thought of as not worth much in those days). Not only that, Jesus forgave people of their sins. He began to show them personally what God is like. The 12 men also noticed Jesus’ relationship with the Father and His personal prayer life.

Soon, Jesus, whom they had grown so close to, was talking about leaving. Imagine their confusion! They had gotten used to following Jesus and learning from Him, and now He said He was leaving them. And not only that, but He said He would be killed!

Jesus also said that He would come back to life after three days and then return to God the Father in heaven. Of course, the 12 men didn’t understand it right away. But then things started happening just as Jesus said they would. One of the 12 men, Judas, betrayed (turned against) Jesus, and another follower, Simon Peter, denied (said He didn’t even know) Jesus three times, just as Jesus told them it would happen. Finally the officials arrested Jesus, gave Him an unfair trial and then crucified (killed) Him.

But why was Jesus willing to die? Was it because He was a nice person? Was it because He didn’t have the power to stop those who killed Him? No. After Adam and Eve sinned, the whole human race was ruined by sin. Each of us breaks God’s law (sins) on a daily basis. Because God cannot stand sin, there has to be a punishment for us, and that punishment is death. But, because God is loving, He sent His Son Jesus to earth to live the life that we could not live. Jesus was perfect! He kept every single commandment! Jesus could die for us because He kept God’s law perfectly. Jesus took our punishment for sin. Jesus made a way for us to be with God for eternity.

Even though the Old Testament told prophecies about these things, and Jesus promised these things would happen, the followers were still confused. It was hard for them to understand the idea of their Lord dying.

But wait! Three days after Jesus’ death, two women went down to the tomb where Jesus was buried. The stone that covered the grave opening was gone. At first they thought it was grave robbers, but then an angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus was alive, just as He said! A man who they thought was the gardener appeared to them and asked the women why they were crying. They quickly recognized Him. It was Jesus alive again! Of course the women ran back and told the other men what they saw and heard.



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The men didn't believe until Jesus showed Himself to them as well. Over the next days, Jesus revealed Himself to over 500 people and even ate a meal with some of His followers.

Right before Jesus ascended (or went back to God the Father), He gave the people who follow Him a special task: no matter where you end up, tell everyone you meet about what happened!

Finally Jesus went up into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father.

This is a short version of the account in the Bible, but hopefully it will help you remember what happened.

How do you think the men felt after they saw Jesus go back into heaven? Happy? Ready to do what Jesus told them to do? Scared? They probably felt a little of all of these.

Several days later, a lot of Jesus' followers were sitting around talking about all the things that had happened. Suddenly, the wind started blowing really hard, and the Holy Spirit came and lived in the people who trusted Jesus. The followers were able to speak in the languages of all the travelers who were in town. Now they could go out and do as Jesus told them — tell everyone what happened.

All of this information leads us right up to our verse tonight — Acts 2:42. *(Read the verse again.)*

Before Jesus left earth, He told His followers to tell the world about Him. In other words, Jesus said, "This thing that happened to Me is a good thing. Sin has been paid for! You have the ability to know God here on earth and be with Him after you die because of Me! We need to celebrate it every day. Tell your friends. Invite them to the party."

A few ways that Jesus' followers celebrated was by doing the things listed in our verse. *(Read the verse again, and then emphasize the four points — meeting together, praying for each other, listening to God's people teach God's Word, and eating together.)* What we see happening is actually the beginnings of the Church. An easy way to remember the list is to think ... met, prayed, listened, ate. *(Repeat a few times so they catch it.)* What are the four things they did? *(Allow a few clubbers to answer — met, prayed, listened, ate.)*

Next week we'll learn more about the lives of the people in the early church.

Tonight, what we are doing is very similar to how Jesus' followers celebrated His life. They MET together, which we are doing tonight, they PRAYED for each other, which we will do *(or if you pray before your lesson you can say that you did)*, and just now you LISTENED to me explain what happened in God's Word.



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We may not have a full meal together (*if you had a snack time you can mention that here*), but we did EAT some crackers (or whatever you chose) earlier. Remember, God's people celebrated Jesus' life, death and resurrection how? Met, prayed, listened, ate! Just think, here it is around 2,000 years later, and we are celebrating in the same way!

What we do at club is about celebrating what Jesus did for us. If Jesus didn't die for our sins and rise from the dead, we would have no reason to celebrate! So this isn't a "party" in the typical birthday cake and ice cream sort of way. But it still is a celebration of the best news ever. Jesus loves you so much that He died for you so you could be with Him forever! And to help us remember that, I brought in the party favors.

In a way, every week when you come to club, or when you go to church, you are celebrating the same way the early followers of Jesus did! Next week we'll talk more about inviting our friends to this celebration.

(Take time to pray with your clubbers and thank God for giving you a reason to celebrate. Thank God for Jesus and His life, death and resurrection. Ask God to help the clubbers think of friends to invite to the celebration.)



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