

One of the great “WOW Moments” in history occurred the night the resurrected Jesus met with his disciples. The shocking presence of Jesus after the cruel crucifixion startled his first followers. Try to put yourself into that room as you consider John’s presentation of the story.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you! After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.
John 20:19-23

1. God Strips Pretenses

Twice Jesus said, *Peace with you!* Only a few days before the men were swearing allegiance to Jesus and confirming their willingness to pay for their commitment with their lives. But when Jesus was nailed to the cross, most of them were nowhere to be seen. Jesus turned a common greeting into a healing word for broken hearts. He knew each of his followers. He knew their strengths and weaknesses. He had seen them at their best and their worst. But he still wanted them on his team.

2. God Shows His Plan

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.

v. 21

Though they were conscience stricken with weak knees and stuttering tongues, Jesus would remake disciples into a mighty force. First, he reminded them of the constant presence of the Father. Jesus was always aware of God’s presence. His awareness of the Father’s presence confirmed his confidence in fulfilling his Father’s plan. As his followers became sensitive to the Father’s presence they grew in their confidence. They knew the living God. The living God knew them. They would not face anything that surprised God. What was true of these first disciples, is true today.

3. God Sends the Paraclete

Jesus sent his disciples with the same authority and power he knew. John captured an amazing picture of Jesus breathing on his followers. Did you see it? In the Garden of Eden, *God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.*

Genesis 2:7

Almighty God infused his special creation with his own Spirit. Now, Jesus prepared his disciples for a dynamic infusion of his own Spirit.

Receive the Holy Spirit. In the coming days his followers would open their lives to the living God through prayer. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Psalms 139, 23, 24

4. God Sets Free His Power

As they allowed the Holy Spirit to have all they were, they would discover the power of God working through them to give grace and mercy. *If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*

John 20:23

The disciples saw the joy of seeing people discover new life in Jesus Christ. But, if they harbored the sin of unforgiveness in their hearts, their witness would be muted. If they became satisfied with working in their own power, they would fail to discover what God has in store for them. The same is true in our lives. God still sends people to fulfill his calling. He still meets people in unexpected places with surprising requests. Where we yield to him, he does more than we would have ever imagined.

